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Passing the Baton: An Integrated Approach to Succession Planning for Local Health Departments

Isabella M. Hardwick

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PASSING THE BATON: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO SUCCESSION PLANNING
FOR LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS.

by

ISABELLA M. HARDWICK

(Under the Direction of Bettye Apenteng)

ABSTRACT

Succession planning is a process that requires more than just an organizational chart illustration of who holds what position within the organization. The process also requires developing and implementing guidelines and best practices to identify and address current and future workforce development needs. Succession planning contributes to an organization's success by providing a mechanism that ensures a talent pool of replacements has been suitably groomed and equipped to fill critical vacancies when retirements occur or on short notice. It can generate operational efficiencies for the field of public health that is faced with chronic budgetary pressure and an impending mass exodus of a workforce generation that inhabits a wealth of knowledge.

Public health in the United States is experiencing a dynamic shift as the baby boomers, those 65 million persons born between 1964 to 1955, are eligible for retirement and are actively leaving the workforce in droves even amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The baby boomers' mass exit leaves a vast void and creates vacancies that will need to be filled quickly. This scoping study identified and summarized succession planning guidelines and best practices in published reports and gray literature and consolidated critical domains and processes into a sustainable framework for adaptation in LHDs. Best practices and guidelines were identified and integrated into a six-step cross-cutting framework that encompasses overarching domains necessary for applicability and sustainability. The integrated framework for succession planning

includes the following steps: (1) strategic planning, (2) workforce analysis, (3) selection and identification, and (4) preparation for promotion, and all-encompassing processes that ensure fidelity of the integrated framework include implementation and evaluation at each domain point. Cross-cutting elements critical for developing and implementing robust succession planning processes include leadership buy-in, stakeholder engagement, transparency, fairness and equity, and a systematic approach to knowledge transfer. The study developed a toolkit for succession planning implementation in LHDs, which consists of a description of the integrated framework, its six domains and associated processes, and a checklist. The toolkit can help LHDs successfully implement sustainable succession planning that preserves and ensures transfer of intellectual knowledge from one workforce generation to the next.

INDEX WORDS: Succession, Succession planning, Succession planning guidelines, Best practices, Local health departments

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by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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DEDICATION

There is always a light at the end of every tunnel. This dream was conceived in 2008, immediately after completing my Master of Public Health almost a decade ago. When I walked across that stage at Emory Rollins School of Public Health, I knew that my heart yearned to go back to school and continue to learn more about this field of study that I was so passionate and cared about so deeply. However, at the time, the DrPH degree was scarce, and it was not until 2015 when I found a suitable program that checked all the boxes that aligned with my heart's desires and passion for practice in public health - a doctorate of public health in leadership.

This entire process and journey have been on God's timing which I know is best, but in my heart, the timing was a few years short of being witnessed by my father, who passed in 2010. We had talked about this moment as the next step in my educational journey when he attended my graduation from my master's in public health at Emory in 2009.

This journey and accomplishment are dedicated to him. Thank you, dad, for imparting your Wisdom to me and teaching me to dream BIG and desire, obtain and achieve more for my life. Your spirit has kept me motivated and inspired to keep pressing and pushing towards until the very end.

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I want to acknowledge the village of support that cheered me on during this journey, that was holding me up in my weakest moments and celebrating with me when I accomplished milestones along the way.

First, I want to acknowledge my husband, Rev. Dr. Lamar Hardwick. He is my true inspiration. Throughout this journey, he listened, cared, pushed, pressed, and challenged me to give this my very best. Thank you for always supporting me, being there for me. You are my backbone, and I would not have been able to accomplish this milestone without you by my side.

My sons, Malachi, Chiefy, and Miles – these three young gentlemen have always been the audience on the front row of every accomplishment that I have. Since birth, all three have been exposed to our educational journey. Sometimes, this included attending classes and participating in one graduation after another. I only hope that this can be an inspiration for their academic endeavors. Thank you for your patience, love, and support. They are so thrilled that this journey has come to an end, perhaps even more than me. I once overheard them say I'll be so glad when mom is done with school so she can play with us again – well, guys, I'm all yours – thank you for your patience.

I want to thank my mom and my siblings – your support and love are unmatched. Thank you for EVERYTHING that you have been to me. We have had to navigate some challenging waters since dad's passing in 2010, but we never lost sight of the importance of our family's bond.

Finally, I want to thank my chair Dr. Apenteng – you have been an all-star unique, and excellent chair. You challenged me, stretched me but most importantly, believed in me even when I did not believe in myself. Thank you for all your long hours of reviews, the back and forth, and pass-backs for edits and revisions. I am grateful to have been under your tutelage for my doctorate journey. To my committee chairs, Dr. Mase and Dr. Opoku, thank you for your unending support, guidance, and encouragement. I am truly humbled and privileged to have gone through this journey with you.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Most of the compelling public health literature is dedicated to describing disease, identifying physical, social, and environmental correlates of disease, evaluating programmatic interventions, and reporting study results (Sellers, 2019). However, activities such as succession planning, which supports the backbone of public health and the public health workforce, have received scant attention, with the existing literature on the subject matter described by some researchers as less substantive (Darnell & Campbell, 2015; Schall, 1997).

Succession planning is a dynamic activity that all agencies and organizations should undertake to assure the seamless functioning of vital programs in the event of planned or unplanned vacancies (Berns & Klarner, 2017; Rothwell, 2005). It is a deliberate and systematic effort by an organization to ensure leadership continuity in key positions. Moreover, it is a process an organization implements to retain and develop intellectual knowledge, capital for the future and encourage individual advancement (Rothwell, 2005, 2010). This, in turn, plays a critical role in developing the talent pool that can be used during transitions (Rothwell, 2010). Payne et al. (2018) argue that succession planning serves as a long-term risk mitigation tool associated with the loss of key leaders, and without this resource, organizations are often forced to make hasty decisions that may have long-term implications. At its best, succession planning offers organizations a way to ensure the availability of qualified candidates who are ready to move into leadership positions as needed (Bonczek & Woodard, 2006; Carriere et al., 2009; Schmalzried & Fallon, 2007). When done well, succession planning involves preparing an organization for a change in leadership (Schall, 1997) while preserving the intellectual

knowledge and ensuring that it is transferred from one workforce generation to the next (Darnell & Campbell, 2015).

The activities that constitute succession planning are especially crucial for all three types of organizations: for-profit (private corporations), non-profits (501(c)(3) tax-exempt operations), and government (e.g., local health departments; Schmalzried & Fallon, 2007). For decades, researchers have conducted studies, developed theories, and established conceptual frameworks to comprehend the elements that contribute to the positive and negative aspects of succession planning (Farah et al., 2019). The inaugural studies focused primarily on the for-profit (private sector) and how family businesses' management was passed down to future generations (Lansberg, 1988). By the mid-20th century, researchers' interest in succession planning evolved and crossed over from for-profit to non-profit organizations (Schall, 1997).

In this discovery process, researchers found that organizations were interested in learning about systematic ways to capture information about their employees regarding performance, progress, and potential for career growth and advancement (Hannon, 2014). Ultimately, organizations started to notice the direct correlation between these variables and the sustainability of the workforce. Thus, succession planning benefits were becoming noticeable not only in the evidence from the literature but also in practice. In the field of public health, awareness about the benefits of succession planning triggered significant interest in further investigation of the underpinnings of succession planning to gain more insight into how succession planning is applied in public health settings (Schmalzried & Fallon, 2007).

According to *Public Health 3.0: A Call To Action For Public Health to Meet the Challenges of the 21st Century* (2017), the public health setting is a multidisciplinary field focused on assuring conditions in which individuals can be healthy (DeSalvo, 2017).

Furthermore, DeSalvo (2017) asserts that for public health to be effective, it requires multiple facets to function together and at the very top of the list is strong leadership and workforce, which is key to strengthening the public health infrastructure and ensuring a strong public health system at both the national and local level. Despite how critical the public health workforce is, it continues to face challenges such as being significantly underfunded, overwhelmed by competing priorities, employee turnover, and demands that continue to grow (Bogaert, 2019; Hoornbeek, 2019). These constraints impact and limit the ability to strengthen the foundation of the workforce that is designed to ensure the public's health (Sellers, 2019) and the ability for the system to operate optimally. These limitations highlight the need to prioritize succession planning activities. Public health needs a viable public health workforce that can ensure a swift passing of the baton as transitions occur (Darnell & Campbell, 2015; Sellers, 2019).

Statement of Problem and Rationale

Over the decades, to advance research and practices on leadership succession, researchers have conducted numerous studies on succession planning in private and public organizations (Berns & Klarner, 2017; Rothwell, 2010; Santora et al., 1997; Schall, 1997; Schmalzried & Fallon, 2007) to understand the phenomenon and the factors that contribute to positive or negative outcomes in organizations (Farah et al., 2019). Despite all of the research conducted to describe succession planning in organizations (Gordon & Rosen, 1981; Greenblatt, 1983; Kesner & Sebor, 1994; Schmalzried & Fallon, 2007), Kesner and Sebor (1994) and Darnell and Campbell (2015) suggested that while their study provided a national baseline for the scope of succession planning in Local Health Departments (LHDs), there is still a lot of work that needs to be done and questions that need to be answered to gain a perspective on succession planning and its implications for LHDs. Further, significantly less effort has been dedicated to understanding

the dynamics of the public health workforce and those who attribute to and influence the entire public health system (Sellers, 2019).

More recently, public health organizations have been dealing with leadership successions (Charan, 2005) since a high percentage of the workforce is aging out and plans to retire or are considering leaving the organizations for other reasons (Sellers, 2019). Data from *Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs Survey* [PH WINS] (2017) indicated that approximately 22% of public health staff were planning to retire by 2023, and 24% were considering leaving their organizations for reasons other than retirement in the coming year (Bogaert, 2019). Although some literature demonstrates that the recession (December 2007 to June 2009) may have slowed down the exodus of eligible retirees, the fact remains that they are still eligible for retirement and will leave a vacuum in the public health workforce (Bogaert, 2019; Sellers, 2019).

This increasingly widening void left in the public health workforce as a result of turnover has impacted the core functions and activities of public health organizations and entities (Sellers, 2019; Ledier 2017) and was underscored by the 2002 Institute of Medicine (IOM, now the National Academy of Medicine) report, *The Future of the Public's Health in the 21st Century*. The report provided compelling assessments about concerns and deficiencies in the public health infrastructure and called for examining how public health organizations are addressing and prioritizing leadership development (Flores, 2019) and examining recruitment, retention, transitions, and succession planning in the public health workforce (The Future of the Public's Health in the 21st Century., 2003). *Public Health 3.0: A Call To Action For Public Health to Meet the Challenges of the 21st Century* (2017) provided similar observations and identified gaps and areas of improvement, further signifying that more research is needed to provide evidence to support a way forward since succession planning is essential for public health agencies in general

(Morton et al., 2004). Without it, organizations risk preserving institutional knowledge, lack adequate preparation of mid-level managers to lead, and the ability to retain high-performing individuals (Sellers, 2019). This issue directly correlates to sustaining the public health workforce pipeline and has been raised from time to time in the public health sector. IOM, Public Health 3.0, and others have been sounding the alarm about the weakening public health infrastructure and the urgent need to strengthen the public health workforce system (DeSalvo, 2017).

Findings of the first study to provide a national baseline of the scope of succession planning activities in local health departments found that only 40% of local health departments (LHD) reported being engaged in either formal or informal succession planning, whereas 60% stated that it is not part of their practice to intentionally identify, develop or retain individuals for future management and leadership roles (Darnell & Campbell, 2015). At the core of the majority of these reports is the realization that succession planning is essential to strengthening the public health workforce (Beck et al., 2017). Without it, the future of the public health workforce will be severely impacted, especially given that the average age of the local government worker today is 45 years, which is three years older than their private-sector counterpart (Kellar, 2016). Additionally, Kellar (2016) notes that 25% of local government workers are 55 years of age or older and are on the brink of retirement. This implies that the largest contributing generation to the workforce is on its way out, thus, leaving a huge void to be filled.

Significance of the Study

As the 65 million persons born from 1946 to 1955 are largely eligible for retirement or have already begun retiring (Kerrigan, 2012), the United States' workforce will experience a substantial shift in the public sector workforce (Bogaert, 2019). In essence, it is estimated that

10,000 baby boomers will turn 65 years every day until 2030 (Bernard, 2012) and will be eligible for retirement. As the baby boomers start exiting the workforce, so will all the intellectual knowledge and technical expertise they have acquired over the years. Although the current public health workforce comprises five generations, of particular interest are two generations: the generation leaving the workforce (baby boomers) and the millennials, which make up 50% of the nation's workforce and will succeed the baby boomer generation (Kosterlitz & Lewis, 2017).

Millennials are considered critical to the workforce pipeline, and organizations need to prioritize succession planning activities that incorporate knowledge transfer from one generation to the next (Charan, 2005; Pazzaglia et al., 2012). Although the generation in between Generation Xers, currently in their 40s and 50s, is next in line to backfill the baby boomers' vacancies, the millennials are of interest because they are the next largest population estimated to comprise 75% of the global workforce by 2025. Thus, the workforce is forced to tap into them since Generation Xers are smaller (approximately 31 million more millennials than Gen Xers in the U.S.) compared to the millennials (Deloitte; Dunoff, 2019; Payne, 2018; Pew Research Center). However, Generation Xers are still critical to the equation of knowledge transfer in the workforce, as they are the intermediary between the baby boomers and the millennials (Dunoff, 2019).

Kosterlitz and Lewis (2017) assert that if organizations in the public sector do not prioritize plans for succession, they will lose the valuable history, competency, and knowledge as the older generations retire. Therefore, it would be necessary for organizations to act quickly to have educational and financial resources budgeted for succession planning, regardless of how researchers have painted millennials' work ethic in previous studies. For instance, millennials

have been labeled as being one of the sources of the problems for succession planning and transfer of knowledge since they are known to change jobs an average of four times during the first ten years in the workforce (Knox, 2012; Putre, 2016). Weisman (2015) states that this points to unprecedented challenges with intergenerational transitions that public health agencies will have to deal with on top of filling all the vacancies in the workforce. Despite this, millennials should not be viewed as a threat to organizational viability; instead, they should be considered more of a vehicle that will carry on the legacy and history of the organization (Kosterlitz & Lewis, 2017).

As the mass evacuation of the baby boomer generation continues, it is expected to reveal the strength and health of organizations and will demand the necessity of ongoing systematic processes to be implemented to ensure that organizations are dealing with succession effectively (Leider et al., 2015; Schall, 1997). Additionally, a strong commitment from the top leadership will be necessary to ensure that successions in the public sector, specifically public health organizations, are properly planned and managed (Rothwell, 2010). Practical evidence has demonstrated that organizations that prepare for transitions with a planned succession process for staff and leadership roles have more favorable outcomes that result in smoother transitions with a positive impact on the organizations (Schmalzried & Fallon, 2007). Also, they are often at an advantage and outperform those organizations with unplanned successions plans (Berns & Klarner, 2017; Farah et al., 2019; Favaro et al., 2015).

Purpose of the Study

Overall, comprehensive research on systematic succession planning is needed since the use of broader public health entities is scarce (Schall, 1997). Hence, a scoping study can help identify research gaps and make recommendations from the existing literature regarding the

overall state for guidelines and best practices for succession planning and provide a mechanism to share the results with practitioners who might lack the time and resources to conduct the work. Thus, this study aims to identify the best practices of succession planning and determine how sustainable best practices are developed and can be applied to local departments.

Research Question

The following research question guided this study:

RQ: What are the best practices for succession planning that can be adapted for local departments of public health?

Research Approach

A qualitative research approach was employed to address the study's research questions. First, a scoping review of the literature on succession planning was conducted to identify the best practices for succession planning that can be adapted for local departments of public health. A thematic analysis was then conducted to describe the themes and current succession planning processes and best practices identified from the scoping review results. This analysis served as a guide for the development of a systematic and sustainable framework for succession planning that public health organizations can use for their processes. A succession planning best practices checklist tool was developed to quantitatively assess the extent to which the resulting framework and guidelines are being followed in local public health districts. The checklist was then disseminated to subject matter experts at the local level in the form of an online survey, to provide recommendations and insight and characterize the extent of adopting sustainable best practices in local health departments.

Summary

Succession planning is a dynamic and necessary part of employee development within an organization (Rothwell, 2005). Failure to plan for a successor in both frontline and leadership roles can create organizational chaos (Santora et al., 2015) and put the organization in jeopardy and at risk for turbulent transitions. Accordingly, organizations should have a plan to ensure that when an essential employee or leader leaves, a transition process will be implemented, and no pandemonium will ensue. The compilation of information gathered from this study will provide insight into a framework for best practices that can guide the development of systematic practice guidelines that can be implemented and sustained in the public health districts.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition: What is Succession Planning

The terminology “succession planning” has many definitions that have been used to describe it in terms of a proactive process to identify, assess and develop and replace individuals for future leadership positions through a process of mentorship and education that provides continuity for an organization (Phillips, 2019). Initially, succession planning was commonly defined as a process to move employees into leadership positions (Hannon, 2014) or as intentionally identifying, developing, and retaining individuals for future management and leadership roles (Rothwell, 2005). As the term evolved, so did the need to expand its interpretation. The Association of State and Territorial Health Official (ASTHO), representing public health agencies in the United States, the U.S. Territories, and the District of Columbia, have defined succession planning as an ongoing process of strengthening an agency’s current and future workforce by developing skills, knowledge, and talent needed for leadership continuity (ASTHO, 2007). Human resources professionals have interpreted it to mean “talent management” or “career self-awareness” (Clutterbuck, 2010), and other definitions include a business plan for the replacement of retiring organizational members (Hank, 2006).

Renowned succession researchers have defined succession planning as an activity that an organization undertakes to prepare, train, preserve, and successfully transition staff into position when vacancies occur (Darnell & Campbell, 2015; Rothwell, 2005; Santora et al., 2015). It is not an activity that can happen in a vacuum; instead, it should be viewed as an intensive and comprehensive initiative that helps ensure that a well-trained cadre of leaders is available to step in where and when the need arises (Cole, 2015). Farah (2019) recognized that succession

planning should not be an isolated event managed only by Human Resources (HR) or the board of directors. Instead, it is a complex process that should be taken seriously and carefully orchestrated. Thus, it may work best when the involvement of its activities is common and beneficial to the organization at large and not just H.R. and the board of directors.

Succession planning is a dynamic and necessary part of leadership development within an organization that assures the seamless functioning of vital programs in the event of planned or unplanned vacancies (Rothwell, 2005). Some scholars believe that unplanned vacancies are detrimental to an organization's strategic plans and that failure to plan can create organizational chaos and put the organization in jeopardy and at risk for turbulent transitions (Santora et al., 2015). Therefore, organizations must invest time and resources into succession planning activities. Fundamentally, succession planning is a pathway for organizations to ensure continuity with the work during transition periods. It is a deliberate and systematic effort to ensure leadership continuity in key positions and practices that retain and develop intellectual knowledge and capital for the future while encouraging individual advancement (Albrecht, 2016).

Regarding public health, there is variation in how and what constitutes succession planning in local health departments (LHDs) and districts across the nation. Some LHDs or districts have implemented "formal" succession planning procedures. This includes written documents with an established formal process for identifying, developing, and retaining staff for future management and leadership positions, whereas for others, the process is informal and without any written documentation (Darnell & Campbell, 2015).

Although succession planning has received limited attention in the public sector compared to the private sector, it is becoming more widely recognized and prevalent. The current

literature documents very few accounts of comprehensive succession planning in public health departments, namely, Ohio (Schmalzried & Fallon, 2007), Washington (Wiesman, 2013), and Wyoming (Cole, 2015), indicating that more needs to be understood about its use and implementation in public health departments. Succession planning is critical for the sustainability of public health organizations. The continued vitality of public health organizations is linked to their ability to survive transitions, and especially those that include changes in leadership void (Santora et al., 2015). As such, more needs to be understood about its use and implementation in public health departments.

History

Succession planning dates back to the 14th century (Whyte, 1949) and was initially related to family businesses and how management would be passed down through generations (Lansberg, 1988). At its inception, the primary focus was on privately owned businesses, but as corporations started to rise, there was a need to establish formal processes in the form of succession plans for continuity in leadership positions (Hannon, 2014). This was also a means to reassure stakeholders about the corporations' stability and sustainability (Hannon, 2014).

Initially, the primary function of a succession plan in the private sector was to ensure a plan in place for an interim leader in the event of an unexpected exit of the current leader (Charan, 2005). Eventually, it resulted in an extensive examination of the requirements that would constitute succession planning. Succession planning programs became more common in the private sector and adhered to a range of best practices that spanned recruitment, mentorship, and talent development. The ultimate goal was to ensure a smooth transition into leadership and management positions (Wiesman, 2013). However, as time evolved, researchers' curiosity about succession planning practices in the public sector increased. The public sector experienced

turnovers that highlighted a lack of formal processes and procedures to address staff's replacement, particularly in leadership positions. An examination of the literature revealed that significant data to support succession planning in the public sector was sparse (Kesner & Sebora, 1994; Schall, 1997). Accordingly, for decades, researchers established evidence to guide the process and provide procedures that would comprise succession planning guidelines. Although more volumes of literature were added to the field of study each decade, it was noticeable that most of the studies and research conducted still focused primarily on the private sector (Kesner & Sebora, 1994; Darnell & Campbell, 2015).

In "Executive Succession: Past, present, and future," published in the *Journal of Management*, Kesner and Sebora (1994) summarize findings of a study in which they reviewed over thirty years of succession research to discern what was known about succession planning and what still needs to be studied. Their work revealed how the field of succession planning evolved as they examined the critical stages of succession research from the 1950s to the 1980s, including various concepts and theories applied to gain a perspective on the process. In the end, they included recommendations that researchers can build upon to continue describing and defining the future of succession planning and offer an overall model (as a starting point) for succession designed to assist future researchers in the field (Kesner & Sebora, 1994).

Between 1980 and 1993, throughout Kesner and Sebora's research, the concept of succession planning in the public sector surfaced and was documented. During this time frame, approximately 130 studies about succession planning were published, and of those, only five were on succession planning in the public sector (Schall, 1997). This implies that succession planning literature and research in public health were not being documented as commonly and frequently as it was for the private sector, even though its occurrences were becoming more

frequent in the public sector. However, as time progressed, researchers and practitioners recognized the significant lack of succession planning research to support the public sector. As a result, it caused them to continue to conduct research and build on the existing literature.

Over the last five years, this trend continued and resulted in an increase in the volume of research dedicated to the public sector. Overtime, the literature revealed the rising numbers of leadership successions in the public sector (Farah et al., 2019). Today, the term succession planning has expanded beyond its initial intent and is a proactive attempt to ensure that a swift transition will occur to fill both planned and unplanned departures in an organization (Schmalzried & Fallon, 2007). Ultimately, this guarantees that the process will be all-encompassing and include cultivating, preparing, and retaining incoming talent to move into the vacant positions when needed.

Succession Planning from the Public Health Perspective

Public health in the United States is experiencing a dynamic shift as the baby boomers, those 65 million persons born between 1964 to 1955, become or are eligible for retirement and are actively leaving the workforce in droves (Bogaert, 2019), even amid the COVID-19 pandemic. This shift has uncovered the reality that would soon be faced by the public health workforce as the baby boomers leave the workforce and vacancies go unfilled due to a lack of prepared talent in the workforce pipeline to inherit the reigns. Even before the pandemic hit the United States' shores, local public health departments were concerned about the public health workforce's capabilities to respond to disasters and significant outbreaks that had become more prevalent dating back to 9/11/2001 (Schmalzried & Fallon, 2007). For decades, researchers and public health officials have raised concerns about the public health system's weakening infrastructure, particularly the need to increase and improve the public health pipeline by

developing succession planning activities such as recruitment, training, and employee retention. These are all critical components of succession planning that need to be implemented as soon as organizations start losing senior staff to retirement (Schmalzried & Fallon, 2007), which will ensure swift transitions and minimizing the risks associated with a lack of succession planning and turbulent transitions.

The main accounts of succession planning include reports from public health agencies in some of the larger states such as Ohio, Washington, and Wyoming that concentrated on the rural local health departments (Darnell & Campbell, 2015). The most recent study that surfaced in the literature was from a national survey on succession planning in local health departments. Prior to that, historical studies concerning succession planning in public health agencies were absent (Cole, 2015).

Ohio

Schmalzried and Fallon (2007) assessed the degree to which local health departments in Ohio were preparing to replace retiring top executives and determine if succession plans were being utilized as a part of the process. Their findings indicated that although 51.7% of the local health departments (LHDs) executives felt that having succession plans was necessary, it was not a high priority among the majority of the LHD, even though 43.7% of the top executives were planning to retire. Further, only 27% of the LHD reported having succession plans (Schmalzried & Fallon, 2007).

Washington

Weisman (2015) examined succession planning and management practices for all 35 agencies in Washington state and received a 100% response rate. The study found that succession planning practices were prevalent in Washington state local health agencies.

Weisman's other findings indicated that 85% of the agencies selected high performing employees for development, 76% sent their staff for formal technical and management leadership training, 70% used cross-functional team projects, and 67% used stretch assignments to develop their employees (Wiesman et al., 2016).

Wyoming

Cole's (2015) study concentrated on the rural local health department in Wyoming. In this study, an assessment was conducted of a stand-alone county health department situated in a community of approximately 70,000 residents. The study's findings revealed four main themes about things to consider regarding succession planning activities in the rural health departments. Although there was no formal succession-planning program or specific grooming implemented at this agency, the health department's director considered organization preservation a priority, proactively concerned about vacancies that would arise (as the baby boomer generation retired) and the need for seamless transitions (Cole, 2015). Another consideration was the lack of connection between the importance of continuing education and systematic mentoring activities for the staff that directly tied into succession planning activities. The last two themes were associated with the successes and barriers experienced as a part of the leadership development endeavors. The achievements were attributed to the comrade of the health department staff, and the obstacles were attributed to a lack of understanding of the function and purpose of public health by the public (Cole, 2015), which ultimately affects funding and priorities. For states like Wyoming, it resulted in what some of the leadership referred to as public health erosion (Darnell & Campbell, 2015).

In 2015, Darnell and Campbell conducted a study, the most recent succession planning account on the local health department level. Two hundred and twenty-five LHDs responded to

the survey (43.4% response rate). The findings serve as a national baseline on the scope of succession planning activities in LHDs. This study is considered the first glimpse into the variation of succession planning across the departments and revealed that very few LHDs have formal processes and written documents to guide their succession planning efforts (Darnell & Campbell, 2015). According to the authors' findings, most of the LHDs in this study reported their succession plan approach as informal with no intentions of developing recruitment, training, or retention plans for the organizations' future. Specifically, they learned that 40% of LHDs reported being engaged in either formal and informal planning, while 60% reported that they do not intentionally identify, develop and retain individuals for future management and leadership roles (Darnell & Campbell, 2015).

Overall, public health encompasses many disciplines, such as epidemiologists, biostatisticians, nurses, doctors, and dentists. It is difficult to quantify the full scope of the contributions that each discipline contributes to a health department and ultimately provides in service to a community (Sellers, 2019). Public health is often the backbone of the infrastructure that resides in the local health departments; however, as the studies have revealed, the local health departments often struggle to recruit and retain staff and provide sufficient plans to transfer knowledge from one generation to the next (Darnell & Campbell, 2015; Schmalzried & Fallon, 2007; Wiesman et al., 2016). Historically, the public's attention only seems to divert to public health during periods of disease outbreak or, more recently, terrorist activity (Cole, 2015), epidemics, and pandemics. A shift in this mindset is necessary, and public health needs to be recognized beyond times of crisis. Public health organizations and leaders should prioritize succession planning to ensure knowledge management and transfer (Bogaert, 2019) and a strengthened public health workforce pipeline.

Benefits of Succession Planning

Succession planning has been known to contribute to successful outcomes when adequately implemented with evidence to support its structure and processes. The literature has documented how succession planning has hugely benefitted organizations in the private sector and prevented them from experiencing organizational chaos (Santora et al., 2015). An example is the well-known General Electric (G.E.) case, often referenced as the well-planned, executed, and continuous CEO succession process, which has been dubbed the Super Bowl of CEO succession planning. Stephen Unger, a managing partner in the Los Angeles office of Heidrick and Struggles, an international executive search firm, stated that this transition at GE was a wake-up call for companies and organizations (for-profit and not-for-profit) that have not thought about the next generation (Girion, 2000).

According to Alleman (2017), GE's succession planning process for its CEO was twenty years in the making, and the success is attributed to the company's leadership institute (Alleman, 2017). GE thrives on developing strong talent through a rotation of a wide range of roles and assignments that allow for the well-rounded development of aspiring talent into leadership positions. These rotations are meaningful and include stretch assignments that provide opportunities for mentorship, coaching, and feedback and have been identified as some of the best ways to build agile and curious leaders (Alleman, 2017). This practice is ingrained in GE's leadership, and managers are trained to recognize that they will not move up if they have not developed multiple successors. A prime example of succession planning at its best, because as a result, GE has not had to fill essential senior roles externally because of the organizations' ability to prepare and train internal staff to transition into positions seamlessly.

Researchers that have looked at the benefits of succession planning have discovered that having a succession plan can be an efficiency driver that contributes towards multiple characteristics for organizational health and longevity, such as improved operational continuity, organizational stability, improved morale, systematic development of leadership competencies, preservation of institutional financial benefits, and decreased turnover costs associated with recruitment and orientation activities. (Darnell & Campbell, 2015; Wiesman, 2013). Ultimately, succession planning benefits lead to a strengthened workforce pipeline that can be prepared to handle transitions from one generation to the next seamlessly (Sellers, 2019).

Operational Continuity

Operational continuity is defined as the ability for a system to continue working despite damages, losses, or critical events to the organization (“Operational Continuity in Recovery and Resolution Planning Exploring the Service Company Structure,” 2015). The terminology of operational continuity has multiple interpretations depending on the industry. The private sector refers to operational continuity as keeping the lights on and maintaining critical shared services that support one or more units in performing essential economic functions in the organization. However, when there is a sudden or disorderly failure in these shared services, a severe disruption in the units’ performance can occur (“Operational Continuity in Recovery and Resolution Planning Exploring the Service Company Structure,” 2015). In the government, the term is often likened to government continuity, which is the principle of establishing defined procedures that allow a government to continue its essential operations in case of a catastrophic event (U.S Government Publishing Office). In public health entities, this is referred to as the continuity of operations (COOP) and is used more for mitigation and planning strategies

designed to create resilience and allow services to continue to be provided in the face of rare challenges (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2015).

While it is reassuring that public health organizations have procedures for rare challenges, it is important that they also have systems to support activities like succession planning that are designed to sustain the continuity of services during transitions (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2009). The research has shown that without proper operational continuity plans in place, LHDs struggle to replace staff during changes, and in the process, experience significant critical losses of knowledge (Rothwell, 2010). Therefore, public health must rely on succession planning procedures to be implemented so that vacancies that arise do not impact the organization's continuity of operations but instead provide a smooth passing of the baton from one person or generation to the next.

One of the benefits of operational continuity is that it ensures that critical knowledge is not lost as key employees separate from the organization. Its purpose is to prevent organizations from incurring increased costs due to turnovers and losses in productivity (Rothwell, 2005). Although the process to plan for operational continuity can be a daunting task for organizations to take on, these organizations do not regret the benefits (Rothwell, 2010). The work requires strategic thinking, critical application of systemic process, and planning that is current and relevant to the organization's needs to be beneficial. On the downside, organizations in public health need to understand that if gaps in continuity of operations occur, public health services and missions can be negatively impacted (Rothwell, 2010).

Financial Benefits of Succession

Employee turnover is a normal process; however, an organization's readiness to respond to the planned and unplanned departures of experienced employees, especially those in key

positions, is necessary and makes a significant difference (Newman et al., 2014). Employee turnover can be defined as the total separation of an employee from an employer (Newman et al., 2014). Employee turnovers include voluntary separations whereby the employee resigns or involuntary separations initiated by the employer due to layoffs or discharges. In other cases, separations are due to retirement, death, and disability (Newman et al., 2014). Regardless of the cause of separation, it contributes to the public health workforce's challenges, leads to the loss of expertise and institutional knowledge, and negatively impacts the organization (Pourshaban et al., 2015). According to the study conducted by Payne et al. (2018), an average of eight employee separations during 12 months is estimated at a net turnover cost of approximately \$400,000 in the field of public health. A high volume of employee turnover can quickly become expensive and unfavorable, resulting in the loss of expertise and negatively impacting organizational performance (Cho & Lewis, 2012; Newman et al., 2014). Therefore, employee turnover can have detrimental outcomes for any organization, including public entities. As such, investing the proper amount of time and effort into a fully defined, organization-wide succession planning program is critical and can have favorable cost-benefits for the organization (Newman et al., 2014).

Research has shown that in the private sector, costs associated with replacing key staff, especially those in leadership positions, can reach up to \$300,000 (Madden, 2019). At the leadership level, the cost of replacing an employee can be twice their base salary, depending on total compensation, role, and experience (deBaumont Foundation, 2019). The financial burden of employee turnover has been associated with the lack of a planned succession process that ensures continuity in the absence of key leadership staff. Studies have demonstrated that organizations that choose to invest in leadership continuity both in the private and public sectors often

experience decreased costs associated with replacing the organization-specific capital and maintaining its strategic direction (Patidar et al., 2016). When performed correctly, succession planning can provide a significant long-term competitive advantage, ensuring that the company has the talent, skills, and expertise needed to achieve its strategic objectives over time.

While one of the immediate benefits of succession planning is organizational cost savings, succession planning also guarantees an organization's financial security in times of transition. When a succession plan does not exist, organizations suffer from financial stress and decision instability (Santora et al., 2015); therefore, when organizations neglect to plan for a succession of key leaders, they are forced to turn to hiring firms to assist them in the search for leaders to fill the vacancies as they occur (Kesner & Sebor, 1994; Santora et al., 2015). This could possibly lead to pandemonium as the appointed leader and organizational staff scramble to adapt (Patidar et al., 2016) since the newly appointed leader will need time to get acclimated to their role and the overall organization's operating procedures and functionalities. In addition to getting acclimated to the organization, the interim successor also has to reestablish critical relationships with donors, partners, and paying clients, essential in the incumbent's revenue-producing success (Patidar et al., 2016). This process requires extra time and resources, which are often not expendable in public health organizations, thus, poses financial vulnerability and other challenges for the organization (Patidar et al., 2016). Although this financial component is often overlooked, it has a detrimental financial impact on the entire transition process that ensues as the organization faces a transition without a succession plan ("Operational Continuity in Recovery and Resolution Planning Exploring the Service Company Structure," 2015).

Rothwell (2005) argues that when organizations commit early and dedicate the right amount of time and effort to the succession planning process, they are likely to gain substantial

benefits and cost-savings. This is especially the case for leadership positions because they require unmatched technical knowledge and experience that takes substantial time to fill (Rothwell, 2005, 2010). Thus, if an organization builds in activities that incorporate succession planning, it buys time to identify talented employees deep in the organization with specialized skills while concurrently training and developing them for future leadership roles when vacancies occur (Albrecht, 2016; Rothwell, 2010), minimizing the financial burden on the organization.

Research has shown that organizations that plan for potential loss of staff or turnover experience lower turnover costs (Reh, 2019). As noted, employee turnover can be expensive and often includes the loss of experienced personnel, which can prevent a health department from performing to full capacity to respond rapidly and quickly to public health needs (Pourshaban et al., 2015). Weisman et al. (2016) estimated that top public health officials' turnover costs averaged 23% for persons 60 years of age or older and 42% for persons between the ages of 50-59. This significant turnover was also confirmed by the Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs Survey (PH WINS') extensive study of the public health workforce, sponsored by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials and The de Beaumont Foundation. Although those in leadership and human resources work hard to minimize vacancies, employee turnover is not inevitable and has severe implications on operational continuity and costs (Payne, 2018). When employee turnover occurs, at any rate, organizations often sustain increased expenses related to charges acquired from filling vacancies and lost productivity (Newman et al., 2014). In most cases, an organization finds it easier and less time-consuming to rely on a hiring firm to fill positions. Although this may be a convenient short-term fix, in the long run,

organizations often learn that it is financially beneficial to invest the time in the planning (Coonan, 2005).

According to McKee et al. (2016), since 2011, relatively large-scale studies in the nonprofit sector have provided converging forecasts of top executive turnover (McKee & Froelich, 2016). The 2011 National Survey of more than 3000 nonprofit top executives found 7% of respondents had already given departure notice, and another 67% reported intentions to exit within five years; of these, 10% were actively considering leaving but had not yet given notice (Cornelius et al. 2011; McKee & Froelich, 2016). The 2015 National Survey conducted by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and regional studies in Philadelphia (VonBergen, 2007) and Charlotte (Carman et al. 2010) also reports the anticipated departure of about two-thirds of the responding executive directors within a five-year window (McKee & Froelich, 2016). Moreover, a multi-faceted study of upcoming leadership needs in U.S. nonprofits conducted by the Bridgespan Group predicted more than 640,000 new nonprofit executives over a ten-year period (McKee & Froelich, 2016; Tierneym, 2006).

Employee Retention

Rothwell (2010) and Darnell (2015) argue that when succession planning is done correctly, it can help organizations preserve institutional knowledge and increase employee retention. Organizations need to assess their current workforce pipeline by conducting environmental scans of the workforce needs and critical positions in the organization. This may help them learn and understand the types of training and mentoring programs they need to create. It may also provide visibility on those positions that are on the verge of becoming vacant, mostly because of retirements. Furthermore, it can facilitate the proper transfer of valuable knowledge and expertise from the employees leaving to the current employees who will assume the critical

leadership roles in the future, guaranteeing organizational continuity and strengthening the workforce pipeline by building talent within the organization (Rothwell, 2010). When organizations start implementing these practices, they will likely have a skilled talent pool of individuals to select during transition times. The expected outcome of implementing such measures results in increased employee retention and long-term decreased costs for recruitment (Darnell & Campbell, 2015; Rothwell, 2010)

For the past decade, public health has been bracing for the possibility of the mass exodus of the baby boomer generation (“Confronting the Public Health Workforce Crisis,” 2008). Reputable public health reports published by organizations and institutes such as the National Academy of Medicine (NAM), American Public Health Association (APHA), and ASTHO have raised concerns and asked important questions regarding preparations that are underway by federal, state, and local public health agencies to prepare for the transition from one generation to the next (Officials, 2012; Sellers, 2019). When the 2017 PH WINS survey results were published, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the deBeaumont Foundation stated that two major themes emerged from the findings: (1) the public health workforce is composed of dedicated and skilled professionals who are dedicated to working to make a difference to the health and lives of the public, and (2) the public health field is highly threatened by a high turnover rate which raises serious concerns since if governmental public health professionals decide to leave their positions, the health of the public would be unprotected.

The deBeaumont Foundation and ASTHO created PH WINS to fill a notable knowledge gap in national data on the governmental public health agency workforce. According to the 2017 PH WINS, approximately half of the public health workforce is slated to leave their positions by 2022. While some may be eligible for retirement, others indicated that they are planning to leave

the workforce for other reasons. This is a major concern for local health departments because, as of the report, 56,360 jobs had already been eliminated (“New Workforce Survey: Public Health Turnover Could Pose Threat to Community Health,” 2019).

On average, public health staff is aged 48 years, six years older than the rest of the U.S. workforce, with 47% of the public health workforce aged over 50 years, and 15% aged over 60 years (Sellers et al., 2015). The public health workforce is aging, and millennials represent 22% of the workforce, compared with 35% of the national workforce (“New Workforce Survey: Public Health Turnover Could Pose Threat to Community Health,” 2019). Across most public health organizations, when a long-term employee retires, they take with them the institutional knowledge that was built over time, sometimes decades, creating a huge void that needs to be filled if no succession planning for knowledge transfer was a part of the transition process (ASTHO, Succession Planning Guide, 2007). This leaves the organizations in very vulnerable positions, as they are required to fall back on recruitment strategies to get the best qualified candidates to replace the retiree. Historically, potential candidates were drawn to work in the public sector in an effort to dedicate their careers to the service. Along with the service job security and retirement benefits, however, this has changed over time and has impacted recruitment efforts for future generations (Fowler & Birdsall, 2020).

In a survey conducted by the School of Public Health in Illinois, researchers discovered critical strategies to increasing employee retention and improving morale include providing a positive work environment, offering competitive pay, and encouraging and developing employee talent (Pourshaban et al., 2015). The researchers learned that these factors encompass high-performing employees, especially when incorporating flexible work schedules and holding periodic staff retreats (Darnell et al., 2013). When combined, these activities increase and

improve an organization's morale and serve as a strong indicator of the employees' motivation and evidence of a well-sustained succession plan. Although the organization's cultural environment does not entirely drive most public health servants, it does not exempt the organizations from recognizing the importance of workplace morale. A healthy organizational culture and morale still contribute to an employees' decision to stay in a position for an extended period, if not their entire career. Key findings from the 2017 PH WINS indicate that 31% of employees leave due to the workplace environment (deBeaumont Foundation, 2019). Ultimately, when morale is sustainably high, employee retention increases and reduces the revolving door. The outcome is that the organization maintains a strengthened workforce pipeline due to the low turnover rate, and over time, less time and resources are spent replacing staff because the revolving door closes (deBeaumont Foundation, 2019).

Accreditation is an Impetus to Strengthen Succession Planning Efforts

The public health workforce is the pipeline, and it sheds light on the readiness of public health professionals, protecting the public's health, and most notably, the need to meet the workforce-related accreditation standards set forth by the Public Health Accreditation Board for LHDs and public health at large (Darnell & Campbell, 2015). Over a decade of collaboration and research strongly indicates that accreditation for public health departments has become one of the most critical initiatives in public health, providing an impetus for LHDs to strengthen succession planning efforts (Darnell & Campbell, 2015; Riley, 2012). Payne (2018) advocates that a pivotal component to succession planning for public health resides in the value of accreditation through evaluating position descriptions and identifying key competencies (i.e., skills, education, and experience) that are essential for critical positions (Payne et al., 2018).

Those who serve in varying capacities in the field of public health are required to maintain a certain level of competencies and stay abreast of specific rules and regulations to effectively and efficiently perform their job functions and requirements (Leider et al., 2015; Sellers, 2019). Maintaining a workforce that is well-trained results in creating a talent pool that an organization can depend upon when transitions occur in the organization. For organizations to achieve this and succeed, the plans for meeting compliance requirements are an integral part of the succession planning documents that the organization creates (Newman et al., 2014; Rothwell, 2010). Essential to improving the public health pipeline is strengthening the top executives' leadership skills and ensuring that the organizations have adequate funding for continuous operation, which ultimately reduces turnover (Newman et al., 2014). For efficiency when transitions occur, this practice should be trickled down the staffing pipeline to increase the talent pool for selection (Rothwell, 2010).

According to Thacker (2009), 20 years earlier, the federally supported task force for Public Health Workforce Development recommended that the field of public health adopt six core strategies for strengthening the public health workforce. This included monitoring and projecting workforce supply, identifying competencies on which to base curricula, designing integrated learning systems, promoting public health practice competencies, conducting evaluations of and research on workforce development efforts, and ensuring support for lifelong learning (Thacker, 2009). Additional researchers (Gebbie et al., 2002) and a well-known public health report ("The Future of the Public's Health in the 21st Century," 2003) echoed the same sentiments. Specifically, they expressed the need for public health to prioritize workforce development activities due to the significance of public health work and activities on the public's health (Sellers, 2019). Lori Tremmel Freeman, CEO of NACCHO, stated that "a skilled public

health workforce is essential for protecting and improving the health and wellness of the public and responding to major health threats. We need to address the needs of the current workforce, communicate the value of public health, and equip future public health leaders with the skills necessary to carry out essential responsibilities” (deBeaumont Foundation, 2019, p.1).

Challenges for Succession Planning

Regarding public health succession planning, one of the key challenges in the 21st century includes understanding how to retain the best workers in the field and helping them develop new competencies that are essential for the mission and vision of public health (Newman et al., 2014). Succession planning in public health organizations is accompanied by its own challenges, including limited funding, insufficient staff, and time to dedicate to the planning process (Darnell & Campbell, 2015). Other significant challenges public health organizations face with succession planning are attributed to the knowledge transfer gap that is created with the aging of the current public health workforce as one generation leaves, and another inherits the positions (Leider et al., 2015; Sellers, 2019). Politically appointed positions can also pose a significant challenge to organizational transitions and impact the financial base and workforce development activities (Halverson et al., 2017; Schall, 1997). Finally, the lack of evaluation can make long-term planning challenging, especially during turnover periods, given the link between succession planning and leadership continuity of operations (Harper et al., 2018), which have been documented to be essential benefits of succession planning.

Insufficient funding is one of the main reasons there is limited support for broad workforce development activities, specifically for the formal implementation of succession planning (Harper et al., 2018) in both SHAs and LHDs. Furthermore, over the years, discretionary funding has been extremely limited at the state and local levels, contributing to the

lack of activities such as formalized succession planning. This is important because discretionary funds are among the resources that SHAs and LHDs fall back on to plan and implement activities (Ledier et al., 2014). However, when limited or no discretionary funds exist, this translates to regulated or reduced time and resources that staff can dedicate to workforce development activities.

Limited Resources: Lack of Funding, Staff, and Time

Public health departments often operate in an environment where they are faced with limited revenues, while the demands for public health services in their jurisdictions continue to rise (Darnell et al., 2013). State and local health departments are at the forefront of assuring and improving the health of the public; however, they are faced with acute financial constraints and resource allocation decisions that constitute challenges for workforce development activities (Ledier et al., 2015). Additional barriers to implementation for succession planning have been reported in the literature for decades and stem from well-publicized funding cuts at the federal, state, and local levels for many public health programs (Cole, 2015; Fee & Brown, 2002). Decisions for activities in public health organizations are torn between meeting and responding to the demands to protect the health and well-being of the public versus activities such as succession planning that, when ignored, can have major implications on the overall functionality of the organization's ability to meet those demands (Cole, 2015; Fee & Brown, 2002).

In 2010, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation conducted a systematic review of public health and concluded that some of the challenges to implementing state's workforce planning activities such as succession planning were due to the lack of executive buy-in, few human resources staff, lack of measurable goals and objectives, and constraints due to budget, time, and civil service rules (Hilliard, 2012). Harper et al. (2018) confirmed the findings from the Robert

Wood Johnson Foundation review, and their survey conducted in 2018 revealed that 66% of SHAs lack funding in their budgets to support succession planning. This finding suggests that succession planning is not one of the priority activities for many of the SHAs in the nation, despite increased impending retirements and an aging governmental public health workforce that has been predicted for 2020 (Harper et al., 2018).

Public health decisions can sometimes have real political consequences, to the extent of how programs are favored or eliminated. In such cases, powerful appropriations can lead to unexpected losses of funding that directly impact activities that are tied to succession planning (Ledier et al., 2014). According to research conducted by Cole and Harbour (2015), this often contributes to a lack of long-term vision in health departments since the city, council, or community has to change the plans every “x number of years” (p. 159). This poses serious challenges for organizations with long-term strategic plans that are essential and include succession planning activities (Cole, 2015; Harper et al., 2018; Ledier et al., 2014).

In 2008, the Association of Schools of Public Health (ASPH) published a policy brief titled *Confronting the Public Health Workforce Crisis*. In this report, ASPH raised an alarming concern that by 2020, the nation will be facing a shortfall of more than 250,000 public health workers across all public health disciplines (“Confronting the Public Health Workforce Crisis,” 2008). ASPH also called for greatly expanding the public health workforce, recommending increased federal funding to state health departments to promote worker training, and enumerating and identifying the current and future needs of the public health workforce (Wilson, 2020). This concern about the public health worker supply has been at the forefront of public health discussions for decades (Leider et al., 2018) and is especially critical when public health is at the brink of facing a mass exodus of the baby boomer generation.

Also, the 2008 economic recession attributed substantially to the public health funding levels, resulting in job losses of approximately 50,000 state and local public health jobs that were never replaced (Leider et al., 2014; ASTHO – Succession Planning Guide, 2007). Without the replacement of these job losses, it becomes challenging for organizations to justify roles for positions that may not be considered critical and high priority functions of the organizations. Significant budget cuts that occur at agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control have trickle-down effects that impact the local health departments' ability to conduct essential public health activities (Cole, 2015). Succession planning requires a committed staff that is financially supported by the organization to ensure the continuity of any succession planning efforts undertaken by the organization. However, a shortfall of the public health workforce has implications on meeting both the needs of the public, as well as organizational needs associated with workforce planning and development and implementation (Darnell & Campbell, 2015).

In addition to budget shortfalls, public health faces limited staff capacity balancing day-to-day workloads with little to no room to commit to succession planning activities. In most cases, training programs that are part of an agency-wide succession planning process take place during regular work hours, and because most LHDs operate with limited staff, it makes it difficult for them to be dedicated and engaged because it takes them away from their jobs (ASTHO – Succession Planning Guide, 2007)

Leider et al. (2018) claim that in order for public health to mitigate the workforce shortages, a unified voice that advocates for public health agencies to prioritize monitoring and evaluation for the workforce is a need, especially when it comes to succession planning, to ensure that institutional knowledge is transferred and key public health positions are maintained. The general stressors that challenge succession planning in the public health sector result from a

lack of sufficient staff in the organizations that can be fully dedicated to succession planning activities (Leider et al., 2018). In the case of local governments, this process becomes even more complicated given the hiring nature of public service that requires fully competitive processes for management and leadership positions, which makes the process less feasible (Wiesman et al., 2016). In addition, significant budget cuts that occur at agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control have trickle-down effects that impact the local health departments' ability to conduct essential public health activities (Cole, 2015).

Significant Gap in Knowledge Transfer

According to Leider (2018), the dilemma in public health is even if every staffer who planned to retire retired, and those who consider leaving their organizations left, the number of expected graduates with formal public health training would still far surpass the number needed for replacement nationally because of retirements or other voluntary separations (Leider et al., 2018). Essential to succession planning activities is the recruitment strategies that are employed since they impact whether the organizations gain access to the cream of the crop graduates who are willing to be trained and positioned to be the future of public health (Newman et al., 2014). Fowler and Birdsall (2020) state that another challenge is that for decades, the public sector has struggled to recruit the most qualified candidates because of the competition from the private sector coupled with the mind-numbing application process applicants have to endure with the public sector. Moreover, overtime working for the public sector has become less attractive to recent graduates and experienced public health candidates because talented potential applicants are no longer willing to endure hiring delays and slow, steady advancement as a result of towering government bureaucracies (Fowler & Birdsall, 2020). Instead, working for the government or public sector has become the last resort that risk-takers like the incoming

millennial generation are unwilling to explore or invest in (Fowler & Birdsall, 2020). This has become more of a challenge for public organizations regarding recruiting and sustaining the best candidates in preparation for transitions and the future of the public health workforce.

Appointed Positions and Potential Challenges

According to a study conducted by Halverson et al. (2017) that examined the tenure of state health officials served from 1980-2017, the average tenure for a district health director was 3.5 years. Essentially, this is a short period for any individual in a leadership role to fully understand their role and establish rapport with the partners, collaborators, stakeholders, and the community they will serve. Short tenures are problematic because they have the ability to create leadership instability, which is essential to any organization's success, including state public health agencies (Hanlon & Pickett, 1984; Rothwell, 2005). Overall, the lack of succession planning for leadership positions can harm the operational continuity of any organization (Kesner & Sebor, 1994; Santora & Sarros, 1995).

This study also discovered a difference in the time served by state health officials (SHOs) appointed by a board of health versus those appointed by governors or secretaries of state agencies. Those appointed by a board of health averaged more than eight years in office compared with averages just under four years for those appointed by governors or secretaries of state agencies (Hanlon & Pickett, 1984). The process regarding how appointments for state health officials were made varied across the nation. Specifically, thirty-five states indicated that a governor appointed the state health officials, twelve states indicated that the positions were appointed by the secretary of an umbrella health-related agency, and four states indicated that a board of health appointed the state health officials (Hanlon & Pickett, 1984). While there is variation in how states chose to make appointments for the leadership roles, it is important to

highlight that this leadership position is appointed and can be tied to the current administration's political agenda. The high turnover rate highlighted in the study conducted by Halverson and colleagues is a strong indication of why succession planning should be incorporated into organizations to ensure operational continuity, especially when certain critical positions are politically appointed (Halverson et al., 2017). As previously noted, research has shown that when there is a succession plan in place, an organization experiences less turbulence during a turnover process. This can impact how the organization maintains operational continuity, relationships with collaborators and partners, and funding implications on programs and strategic plans (Sridhara & St John, 1998).

In public health, especially state and local health departments and districts, most of the work is conducted through partnerships, building trust and relationships with the collaborators, stakeholders, and the community. Political interference can sometimes have negative implications on the plans within the public health organizations; therefore, when selections for successors are made, there is little or no consideration for continuity of the work that the predecessor already has ongoing if there was no active succession plan in place (Halverson et al., 2017; Hanlon & Pickett, 1984). However, if leadership turnover is frequent due to political appointments, whether by boards or governors, organizations are always at risk for starting over and impacting the organization's leadership and strategic plans (Halverson et al., 2017; Hanlon & Pickett, 1984).

Summary

The literature revealed numerous findings regarding succession planning for for-profit organizations and less depth on nonprofit organizations. One of the most critical factors for succession planning is an organization's ability to prepare for operational continuity of essential

leadership positions during transitions (deBeaumont Foundation, 2019). Current literature suggests that succession planning is a critical component for public health organizations and entities to develop, in addition to developing and training a talent pool of professionals ready to step in when vacancies occur (Rothwell, 2005; 2010). It is also a strategic process that lends itself to the knowledge transfer of skills and expertise from one generation to the next while maintaining organizational stability. Frequent and unplanned leadership turnover often creates turbulence within the organization and staff, and the population served experiences adverse outcomes as a result of the organization's destabilization (Kesner & Sebora, 1994; Santora & Sarros, 1995). Unexpected transitions are labor-intensive on the organization and community and compromise funding and established relationships with partners and collaborators, contributing to an unhealthy working environment.

Gaps in the Literature

Although the literature does not provide concrete outcomes on succession planning in public health organizations and entities, it sporadically points out the importance of prioritizing succession planning, especially in public health, given the baby boomer generation's mass exodus, the need to transfer knowledge from one generation to the next, and the need to fill vacancies as retirees exit the workforce in large numbers. The literature also does not provide substantive information on established and systematic succession planning in public health organizations. Additionally, the challenges of establishing the best frameworks to guide public health organizations are not fully addressed in the literature. The current literature documents very few accounts of comprehensive succession planning in public health departments in Ohio (Schmalzried & Fallon, 2007), Washington (Wiesman, 2013), and Wyoming (Cole, 2015).

Therefore, this research aims to understand the best practices for succession planning that can be adapted for local departments of health. One of the benefits of succession planning is when done well, it has that inherent ability to create a healthy organization with financial stability and improved morale that thrives on decreased turnover costs because of strategic planning built into the succession plan for employee retention (Darnell & Campbell, 2015; Schall, 1997). As a result, the organization experiences better operational continuity and has a strengthened workforce pipeline with a talent pool ready to assume the positions when turnovers occur (Sellers et al., 2015).

There may not be one solid way to identify and implement succession planning for public health organizations because different organizations have different structures. This needs to be taken into consideration when developing a succession plan. However, since the for-profit sector is ahead on succession planning, the lessons learned can be applied to the roadmap developed for local departments of health.

Conclusion

Overall, the literature demonstrated that organizations with formalized succession planning programs had a higher chance of surviving during an organizational transition. Specifically, they had a higher percentage of satisfied employees, fewer turnovers, and more trained and qualified candidates prepared to assume roles when vacancies occurred (Harper et al., 2018; Ledier et al., 2014; Rothwell, 2010). An overview of the methodology used for this research study will be discussed in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Procedure for the Collection and Treatment of Data

This research project is a qualitative study that utilized a scoping methodology and descriptive thematic analysis to address the study's research questions. The scoping methodology answered the following research question: What are the best practices for succession planning? The descriptive thematic analysis gathered from the scoping review addressed the best adaptations for succession planning for public health LHDs. Subsequently, the checklist was used to engage subject matter experts (SMEs) that validated the relevance of the checklist and deemed it applicable to LHDs in Georgia. This chapter provides information on how the scoping methodology process was conducted, the descriptive thematic analysis approach, and the ethical considerations and limitations of this study.

Scoping Methodology

The scoping methodology was used to address the study's research question. At its core, the scoping methodology helps researchers identify the types of available evidence in a given field. This methodology, inspired by seminal authors Arksey and O'Malley (2005), has been used to examine the breadth and depth of the literature on a given topic and provide a clear indication of the studies covered by the specific topic, as well as identify and analyze knowledge gaps. This approach clarifies the concepts and definitions of the best practices for succession planning and informs the audience about the literature's current evidence. Scoping studies have the benefit of summarizing and disseminating research findings to policymakers, practitioners, and consumers who may not have the time or resources to take them on (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Antman et al., 1992). This explicit approach increases the reliability of the findings and

responds to any suggestion that the study lacks methodological rigor (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Mays et al., 2001) and ensures replication by other researchers. Unlike narrative or literature reviews, the scoping process requires analytical reinterpretation of the literature (Davis et al., 2009). The scoping study presents an overview of all material reviewed, and consequently, issues of how best to present this potentially large body of material are critical (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

This scoping methodology's overall process included a comprehensive scoping selection process of the literature. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were established based on the scope of succession planning best practices. This was an iterative process involving searching the literature, refining the search strategy, and reviewing articles for inclusion. In the end, sufficient studies were identified and grouped to extract contextual information from the findings.

Process

The scoping process developed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) involves a five-stage methodological framework (see Table 1.) with an optional sixth stage. Table 1 outlines the scoping review methodology.

Table 1

Scoping Review Methodology

Steps	Process
Step 1: Identifying the research questions	This clarifies and links the purpose and research question.
Step 2. Identifying the relevant studies	Using a literature search process to feasibility with breadth and comprehensiveness

Table 1 continued

Scoping Review Methodology

Steps	Process
Step 3. Study selection	Careful review and selection of studies using a post-hoc inclusion and exclusion criteria derived to meet the specifics of the research question.
Step 4. Presenting the data	Charting the data in a tabular and narrative format developed to extract data from each study.
Step 5. Collating the result	Identifying the implications of the study for policy, practice, or research.
Step 6. Consultation (Optional)	This process extends an opportunity to subject matter experts (SMEs) to provide recommendations and insight.

Step 1. Identify the Research Question

Arksey and O'Malley (2005) recommend a broad approach to the research question adopted to guide the study. This makes room for the study to generate a breadth of coverage. The scoping study was guided by the following question: RQ1: What are the best practices for succession planning that can be adapted for local departments of public health?

Step 2. Identifying the Relevant Studies

In this stage, the comprehensiveness and breadth of the studies identified and included in the scoping process are key. This is focused on the decision-making process used to determine the relevant studies, terms to use, sources to search, time span, and language (Levac, 2010). In order to achieve a broad overview of research and studies presented in the literature, various sources were searched and reviewed over a six-month period. The search criteria and database consultation was conducted with the school librarian. The search was limited to articles published from 2003 - 2020, written in English. International articles were excluded. The search included electronic databases EBSCOhost, ProQuest, PubMed, PsychINFO, Scopus, gray

literature, references, and bibliographic lists, relevant chapters of textbooks, and public domain websites. The initial search terms included: succession planning, public health, local health departments, and workforce turnover. Initially, the search generated thousands of results that required an appraisal to determine whether the articles were suitable and aligned with the research question. Close examination of the titles and abstract reviews revealed that most of the literature did not pertain to the research question. The various mechanisms for searching generated a total of 4,135 articles. This review resulted in 167 full-text articles that were deemed potentially relevant.

Table 2

Search Terms and Limitations

Search Terms	Search Limits
Succession Planning	Publications written in English
Local Health Departments	Published in the United States
Workforce Turnover	Published between 2003-2020
Public Health	

Step 3. Study Selection

This stage involves a post-hoc inclusion and exclusion criteria developed to meet the specifics of the research question. This includes determining the abstract review process and when it will be necessary to refine the search strategy. Researchers independently review full articles for inclusion (Levac, 2010). In the case of disagreements on study inclusion and exclusion, a third reviewer was invited and makes the final determination on whether to include the study or not. In this step, the search strategy for electronic databases was developed from the research question, and definitions of key concepts were identified (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

Initial review of the publications revealed that the search strategy had identified a large number of irrelevant studies not associated with the research question. Criteria were agreed upon

by the reviewers for inclusion and exclusion and were used to sort the literature for potential studies to include in the scoping review and answer the research question. This was an iterative process that required searching the literature, refining the search strategy, and reviewing articles for inclusion and exclusion (Arskey & O'Malley, 2005).

Context

Although most of the succession planning literature focuses on leadership and management transitions and are centered around the ongoing process of strengthening an agency's or organization's current and future workforce for leadership continuity (ASTHO, 2007), succession planning is equally essential for frontline and technical staff. Renowned succession researchers have defined succession planning as an activity that an organization undertakes to prepare, train, preserve, and successfully transition staff (frontline and leadership) into position when vacancies occur (Darnell & Campbell, 2015; Rothwell, 2005; Santora et al., 2015). This study used the same definition. Table 3 presents the study's inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Table 3

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Local Health department	Talent Management
Succession Planning	Management Practices
Public health Workforce	
State Health Agencies	

Emphasis was placed on selecting articles that defined succession planning guidance and best practices. No disagreements occurred, and a final number of studies for inclusion was agreed upon.

Step 4. Charting the Data

A data-charting form was developed to extract data from each study by synthesizing and interpreting the qualitative data through sifting, charting, and sorting the content according to key issues and themes (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). According to Arksey and O'Malley (2005), the next process involves charting the data, which involves a technique to sort through the data for synthesis and interpretation. Using descriptive analysis, the articles were sorted according to succession planning guidance and best practices. Each article was charted using Microsoft Excel and was classified according to the title, author, year of publication, study location, intervention type, study population, aims, methods, and outcomes of the study. Through this process, commonalities among the recommendations and frameworks were identified.

Step 5. Collating, Summarizing, and Reporting Results

In this phase, an analysis framework or thematic construction was used to translate the breadth of the literature. A qualitative thematic analysis was presented (Levac, 2010). This analysis was the final step used to summarize and synthesize the literature for this scoping review. It resulted in identifying common categories of recommendations for best practices and guidelines for succession planning adaptation in the health districts.

Step 6. Consultation (optional stage)

The consultation phase extended an opportunity to subject matter experts (SMEs) who provided recommendations and insight (Levac, 2010). This step incorporated knowledge transfer opportunities based on the exchange with the SMEs in the field (districts). For this process, selective health department staff members were consulted and reviewed the checklist to determine its relevance and applicability to local health departments.

Descriptive Thematic Analysis

Descriptive thematic analysis was performed to identify patterns of meaning across the results of the scoping review. The patterns that emerged were identified and categorized into significant themes to develop a framework for adaptation. The following approach that focuses on identifying themes or patterns of meaning across the dataset was employed, providing answers to the research questions.

RQ: What are the best practices for succession planning that can be adapted for local departments of public health?

Different orientations are applied for thematic analysis, and for this research, the reflective thematic analysis approach, which is a combination of the inductive or semantic and critical or realistic process, was followed. In the inductive method, the coding and theme development were driven by the content of the data gathered from the scoping review. The semantic process is one whereby the coding and theme development reflect the explicit content of the collected data, and the critical process focuses on reporting an assumed reality evident in the data. The overall thematic approach followed the guidelines initially outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), which is a six-step sequential process for conducting the analysis. Each phase is built on the previous phase with a recursive process that requires going back and forth between the phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The sequence of the phases included familiarization with the data, which involved reading and re-reading the data to become very familiar with its content.

The steps are listed as follows:

1. Coding the data involved generating succinct label codes that identify important data features and answer the research questions. This process included coding all the data and then collating all the codes for later use in the analysis process.

2. Generating initial themes step involved examining the codes and collated data to pinpoint significant broader patterns of meaning. Collated data relevant to each step or process was reviewed for the viability of each theme.
3. Reviewing the themes is a phase that was checked against the findings to determine their alignment with the research questions. In this phase, the themes were refined, and some were split, combined, or discarded.
4. Defining and naming the themes is a phase of detailed analysis of each theme that involved working out each theme's scope and focus and naming the themes.
5. Writing up is the final phase, is weaving together the analytic narrative and data extracts and contextualizing the analysis in reference to the research question and the literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
6. Finally, a checklist was developed and completed by SMEs from the LHDs. The SMEs' purpose was to assess the checklist and determine its relevance and applicability to local public health departments.

Ethical Issues and Implications

Ethical consideration was prioritized throughout this study. Thus, approval from the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Program, Institutional Review (IRB) was sought from Georgia Southern University (see Appendix A), and the Georgia Department of Public Health (see Appendix B). Once approval was provided, the SMEs and HR directors were contacted using information accessible on the Georgia Department of Public Health website via telephone or email. Upon acknowledgment of the email for participation to complete the checklist, the IRB documents were shared along with the checklist for dissemination.

All files were retained and stored on a computer to which only the researcher has access. Name identifiers were not added to the checklists. The risks to human subjects associated with this study were minimal. All participants were over 18 years of age and did not demonstrate any impaired mental capacity as determined by their ability to perform their responsibilities in their workplace. All materials collected for this study will be destroyed per the protocol of Georgia Southern University.

Methodological Limitations

Qualitative research is focused on providing in-depth details for research studies and offering information on complex situations and circumstances that involve exploratory research seeking to understand how and why a particular phenomenon operates or exists (Shi, 2008). Thus, the information gathered is often collected in the form of interviews, focus groups, observations, and existing documents (Shi, 2008). Methodological benefits of qualitative research include that it makes room for the researcher to capture thought and attitudes in data collection and is not bound to the limitations like quantitative methods (Shi, 2008). Moreover, it provides an explanation of things that numbers alone cannot reveal or explain. Qualitative research is also more flexible than quantitative research.

A significant delimitation of this study is that it only focused on identifying the best practices that have been used for succession planning in organizations. This research study's first limitation is that the search strategy may have failed to identify all relevant succession best practice frameworks or models for adaption to LHDs. However, gray and published literature were incorporated in addition to the different database searches. Also, this study's search was limited to public health and did not focus on other disciplines. Finally, there was a potential for individual bias because the checklist was self-reported. Therefore, responders may have been

influenced both consciously and unconsciously to provide favorable answers when responding to the checklist. This scoping review summarized common steps and processes essential for succession planning. It can also help practitioners consider applying the framework for adaptation as an option for their organizations to guide them in a systematic approach that can be sustained.

Summary

The goal of this chapter was to outline the research methods that were used to answer the research questions in this study. The study's findings will guide adaptation recommendations for succession planning and inform or initiate how systematic succession planning programs can be implemented and sustained in LHDs. Chapter four will provide the study results and demonstrate that the methodology in Chapter Three is adhered to.

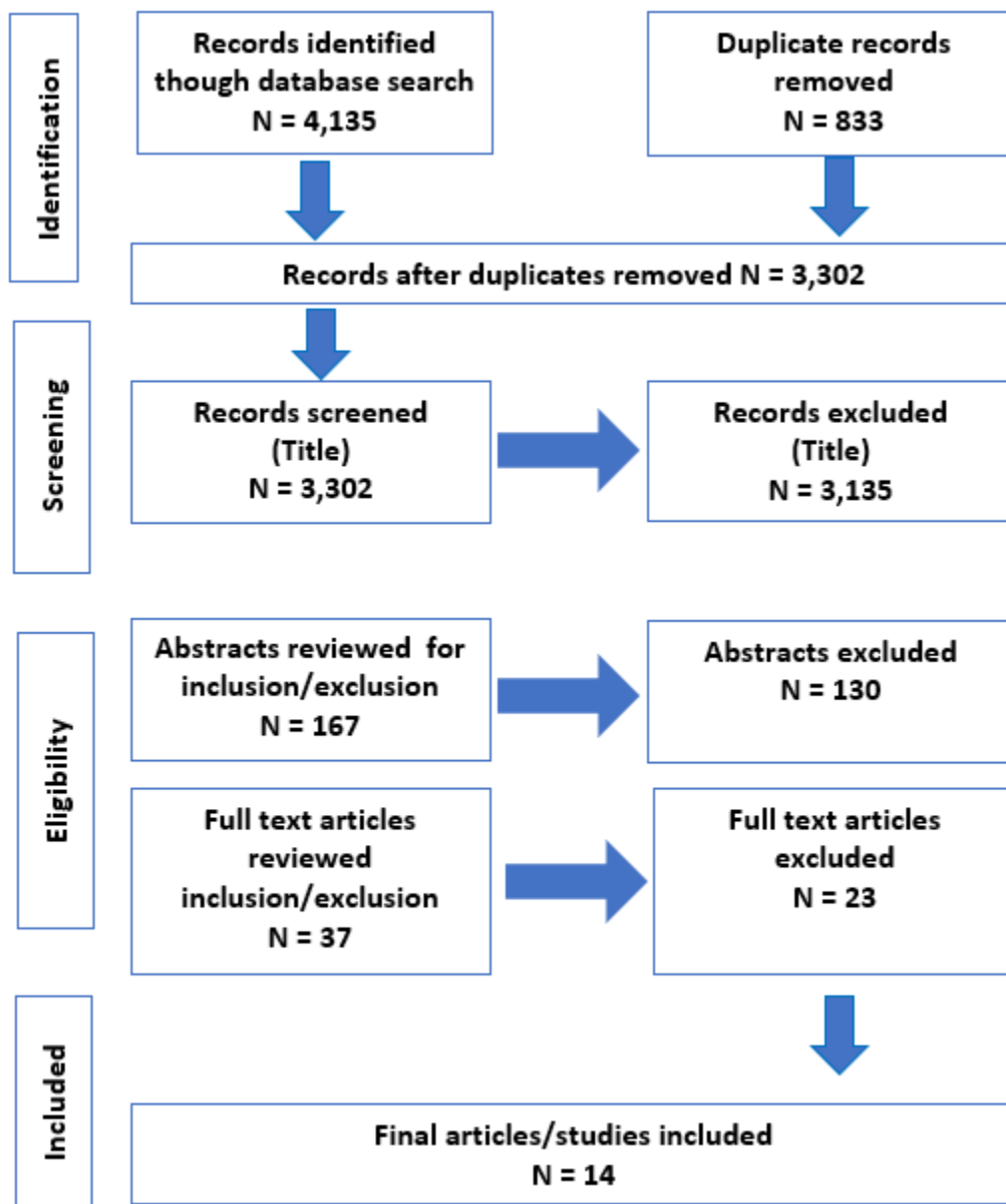
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Succession Planning in Public Health

This chapter will discuss the results of the scoping review process, and will include a detailed description of the scoping review steps beginning with the study selection results. The results of the study selection process are illustrated in Figure 1. The original search using a combination of the search terms included in Table 2 identified 4,135 publications, from which 833 duplicates were removed. A total of 3,302 articles were screened by title and from this list, 167 publications initially satisfied the inclusion/exclusion criteria. One hundred and thirty articles were excluded following the abstract review because they did not meet the selected criteria. Consequently, 37 articles were included for full-text review. Of these, 23 were excluded because they did not meet the inclusion criteria based on the scope of succession planning. While the 23 articles that were reviewed described workforce activities and the need for succession planning efforts, they did not highlight succession planning guidelines and best practices for implementation. In the end, nine were selected from publications and five from gray literature guidance documents as final products that provided best practices and guidelines.

Figure 1

Study Selection Process Practices

Description of Studies

All the studies included in this scoping review were conducted in the United States and focused on succession planning processes and procedures about the field of public health,

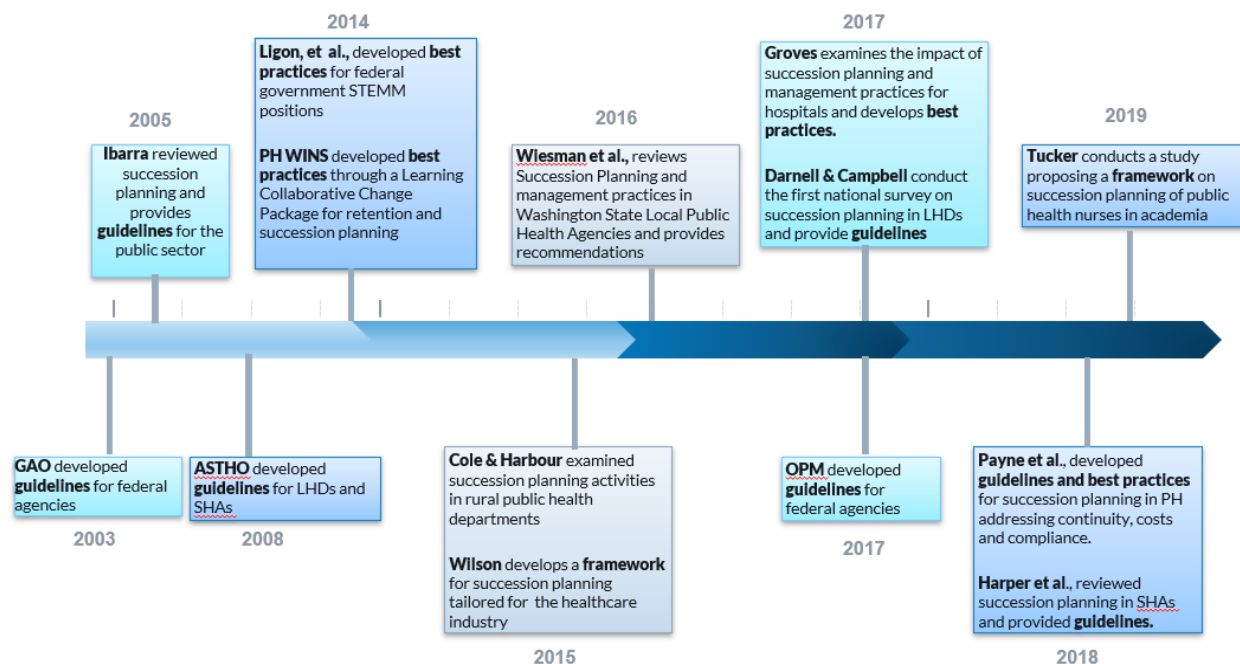
specifically federal and state health departments (Darnell & Campbell, 2017; GAO, 2003; Harper 2018; OPM, 2017; Wiesman, 2016), hospitals (Groves, 2017); and nursing (Payne, 2020; Tucker, 2018). Limited studies concentrated on best practices for public health (deBeaumont Foundation, PH WINS and ASTHO, and Learning Collaborative Change Package on Retention and Succession Planning; ASTHO, 2008; Ligon et al., 2014). Most of the processes and best practices identified in the literature have been developed based on the experiences from the private sector and have primarily focused on for-profit organizations (Kesner & Sebor, 1994; Santora et al., 2015). As mentioned, literature and research on succession planning in the public sector only started to surface in the late 1980s, as the public sector recognized the significance of succession planning and its impact on its workforce (Schall, 1997).

To identify best practices with broad applicability to public health, the articles were selected to provide general examples of approaches (processes and steps) consisting of guidelines and best practices from primarily the public sector perspective. Ligon et al. (2014), Wiesman et al. (2016), and deBeaumont Foundation: The PH WINS Learning Collaborative Change Package (2014) provided best practices and implementation examples. Agencies and organizations such as the federal Office of Personnel and Management (OPM), the Office of Government and Accountability (GAO), and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) contributed to most of the guidelines and practices because they have done considerable research on key concepts and tools that are transferrable to public health districts. This was accompanied by studies that have emphasized succession planning and recommended guidelines and best practices (Cole, 2015; Darnell & Campbell, 2017; Grooves, 2007; Harper et al., 2018; Ibarra, 2005; Payne et al., 2018; Tucker, 2020; Wilson, 2015). When carefully reviewed, the best practices and guidelines translate into processes that can be combined and

used as a footprint for succession planning for LHDs. The select articles are illustrated in Figure 2, which provides the chronological order of the findings.

Figure 2

Chronological Order of Guidelines and Best Practices



The GAO, OPM, and ASTHO guidelines were most critical, as they were developed specifically for public health practices with the public sector in mind (Harper, 2018) to help them plan for and address issues relating to the loss of key leaders and personnel at any organization level.

GAO

GAO guidelines were developed as a part of a reexamination of how the federal government should address and strengthen the current and future organizational capacity in the face of budgetary concerns and an aging workforce. Collectively, GAO identified six steps to guide the executive branch agencies to develop their succession planning and management

initiatives. These steps were designed to ensure that federal agencies have the capacity to achieve organizational goals and effectively deliver results now and in the future. Implementation of these guidelines should include:

1. Active support of top leadership – the importance of commitment and engagement of leadership to their organization’s succession planning process and ensuring that initiatives for the process receive adequate funding and staffing resources necessary to operate.
2. Link to strategic planning – focus on tools dedicated to developing talent pools equipped to meet the organization's long-term mission
3. Identify talent from multiple organizational levels – identify high performing employees at all levels (entry-level, frontline, and leadership) and provide them with the tools and resources for professional development
4. Emphasize developmental assignments in addition to formal training – focused on developmental stretch assignments and formal training to strengthen skills and competencies that prepare individuals for seamless transitions in the organization
5. Address specific human capital challenges, such as diversity, leadership capacity, and retention – an awareness for challenges with demographics and place emphasis on achieving a diverse workforce while maintaining leadership capacity and increasing retention of staff.
6. Facilitate broader transformation efforts – critical to succession planning is fostering transformation by selecting and developing teams and leaders who support the organization’s succession planning processes.

ASTHO

ASTHO established best practices for succession planning with the public sector in mind, specifically public health practices. Although the main fundamental concepts originated from some earlier work in the private sector, additional distinctions had to be considered for the public sector, given some of the challenges of the public sector, such as budgetary constraints and limited staffing resources. ASTHO guidelines mirrored similar components to GAO and OPM, including pre-planning, implementation, and evaluation phases. Critical steps to the pre-planning phase were connecting succession planning to strategic planning and establishing responsibility for the succession planning process through committees and workgroups charged with holding leadership accountable. This phase focused on targeting leadership, management, and critical positions and securing active support and involvement of top leadership in the organization as a fundamental component for achieving success. An additional step to the process includes assessing the workforce and evaluating competencies to determine organizational needs. The specific components included: (1) securing active support of top leadership, (2) connecting succession planning to strategic planning, (3) establishing responsibility for succession planning, and (4) addressing specific human capital challenges, including diversity, leadership capacity, and retention (ASTHO, 2008).

The implementation phase of the ASTHO guidelines focused on the execution of the pre-planning stages into an action plan, using the foundation of the succession planning processes. The steps ASTHO recommended to achieve success were tied to the careful selection and development of candidates that would ensure preservation and transfer of knowledge and competencies by (1) identifying key leadership and professional positions and assessing needed skills, (2) assessing current staff against identified competency requirements to identify talent

and development needs, (3) selecting candidates for development, (4) creating opportunities to develop leadership talent, and (5) matching the talent pool with vacancies (ASTHO, 2008). Finally, ASTHO guidelines also emphasized the importance of regular evaluation to assess progress, measure results, and refine the process (ASTHO, 2008).

OPM

OPM succession planning guidelines comprises six domains: (1) linking strategic and workforce planning decisions, (2) analyzing gaps, (3) identifying talent pools, (4) developing succession strategies, (5) implementing succession strategies, and (6) monitoring and evaluating (Harper, 2018). The three core functions that are instrumental to the process are (1) leadership commitment, (2) employee commitment to learning and leader, and (3) clear program goals. Although the OPM model was designed for federal agencies, it offers a valuable process for other governmental agencies to follow (Beck et al., 2017), including LHDs. However, in a study conducted by Harper (2018), it was discovered that the OPM-recommended succession planning activities were not being implemented, and limited succession planning was occurring in SHAs.

Although the fundamental concepts originated from some earlier work in the private sector, additional distinctions can be considered for the public sector, given some of the public sector's challenges that were alluded to from the literature. The succession planning guidelines and processes from GAO, OPM, and ASTHOs in conjunction with findings from Darnell and Campbell (2017), Harper et al. (2018), Payne et al. (2018), Tucker (2020), and Wiesman et al. (2016), can add valuable contributions to public health practices (Harper, 2018) in response to addressing succession planning practices.

Integrated Framework for Succession Planning in Public Health and Associated Best Practices and Guidelines

This scoping literature review revealed that fundamental best practices for succession planning for local health departments should comprise a framework with processes to be sustained. In addition to achieving success with the process, the literature suggests that local health departments must be willing to cross-collaborate on efforts of succession planning as it fosters opportunities to learn from one another and develop proven development activities (Ligon. et al., 2014). The scoping review identified guidelines and best practices (see Appendix C) that have been used for succession planning. The identified best practices and frameworks guided the proposed integrated framework developed by the author for succession planning in public health presented in (Figure 3) accompanied by the descriptions of each step in the process (Table 4). The proposed framework can be implemented as guidelines and best practices that consist of the domains with steps and overlapping activities and objectives. The six-step cross-cutting integrated framework recommended for the LHDs includes the following steps: (1) strategic plan, (2) workforce analysis, (3) selection and identification, (4) preparation for promotion, (5) implementation, and (6) evaluation. Steps 5 and 6 are essential throughout steps one to four because they ensure the integrated framework's holistic application and fidelity. Cross-cutting elements critical for the development and implementation of robust succession planning processes include leadership-buy-in, stakeholder engagement, transparency, a systematic process to knowledge transfer, fairness and equity. At each stage, the framework describes the domains and steps followed by examples of best practices that have been tried and tested. The current study defined succession planning as an inclusive activity (an approach that does not only focus on leadership and management succession) and a process that is equally

important for technical and frontline staff. Where applicable, distinctions were made between the two in the methods and practices described.

Figure 3

Integrated Framework for Succession Planning Practices



Table 4

Descriptions of Framework Steps

Domain	Step
Strategic Planning	<p>This step involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying the long-term vision and direction of the organization Developing an action plan that links the strategic plan and workforce plans Securing active support of top leadership Connecting succession planning to the values of the organization Creating a SWOT analysis that identifies the organizations current and future needs, including workforce needs Developing a communication plan

Table 4 continued

Descriptions of Framework Steps

Domain	Step
Workforce Analysis (Competency modeling and gap analysis)	<p>This step involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing existing core and technical competencies and models using focus groups and survey methodology • Conducting competency gap analyses by examining gaps and deficiencies for core competencies and technical competency requirements • Identifying current proficiency gaps in incumbents' • Developing competency model and job analysis documentation • Calculating talent needed to meet organizations long term plans
Selection and Identification	<p>This step involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying and selecting candidates for development from multiple organizational levels • Assessing individuals for learning agility (an individual's readiness and ability to learn from experiences and be adaptive to changing environments) • Identifying recruitment strategies • Recruitment and relocation bonuses • Special programs • Identifying retention strategies • Retention bonuses • Quality of work life programs
Preparation for Promotion	<p>This step involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating opportunities to develop leadership talent • Identifying development/learning strategies • Goal setting and performance measurement • Using 360° feedback for development purposes • Tracking and validating individual development • Emphasizing developmental assignments in addition to formal training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planned job assignments - Formal development - Coaching and mentoring - Assessment and feedback - Action learning projects - Communities of practice - Shadowing

Table 4 continued

Descriptions of Framework Steps

Domain	Step
Implementation	<p>This step involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a blueprint for putting the strategies into operation and applying measures of success • Implementing succession strategies • Implementing strategies for maintaining senior level commitment • Implementing the communication plan • Implementing recruitment strategies • Implementing retention strategies • Implementing development/learning strategies • Linking succession planning to HR processes • Performance management • Compensation • Recognition Transparency • Recruitment and Retention • Workforce planning
Evaluation	<p>This step involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an evaluation and accountability plan that overtly describes measures, and monitors what success looks like • Tracking selections from talent pools • Listening to leader feedback on success of internal talent and internal hires • Analyzing satisfaction surveys from customers, employees, and stakeholders • Assessing response to changing requirements and needs
<p>Cross-cutting elements that are continuous and necessary for sustaining the succession planning framework include:</p>	
Leadership-buy-in	<p>This involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • connecting succession planning to the needs and interests of senior leaders. • receiving active support of top leadership
Stakeholder engagement	<p>This involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishing responsibility for succession planning • engaging and ensuring executive participation and commitment from leadership, stakeholders, and partners

Table 4 continued

Descriptions of Framework Steps

Domain	Step
Transparency	<p>This involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitating broad communication around succession planning activities • providing clear and consistent communication from organizational leaders about what constitutes success in development • mutual honesty in the promotion process and regarding upward mobility
Fairness and Equity	<p>This involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating a culture of talent sharing • including initiatives for fairness and equity as part of an organization's training and strategic planning • creating an environment that values training around diversity, fairness, equity, and inclusion • developing needs assessment programs that evaluate the current state of the organization, the employees, the stakeholders, and the customers
Systematic process to knowledge transfer	<p>This involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying and implementing knowledge capture and transfer strategies • facilitating smooth transfer of responsibilities from employees that are retiring to emerging leaders • developing programs that allow select retirees to become reemployed annuitants to facilitate the transfer of knowledge in critical areas

Strategic Planning

At the core of the framework is strategic planning. The first step identified in the OPM succession planning process points to linking the strategic and workforce planning decisions (Harper et al., 2018) to the organization's succession plan. This is critical because it ensures that the documented organizational goals include the need and importance of the succession plan. Ligon et al. (2014) also confirm the importance of the need to formulate a strategy that involves ensuring the agency or organization's sustainability and success. A succession planning process

requires broad engagement, top-level support, tools and resources, and constant monitoring and evaluation to measure progress toward agreed-upon goals and objectives (Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, 2007).

According to the OPM guidelines, the purposes of this phase is to understand the strategic direction of the organization and the need for leadership succession management, and formulate a clear and convincing case for agency leaders to dedicate resources (both budget and personnel) to succession management planning. This step emphasizes the importance for organizations to think proactively and plan for future skills needed to meet the agency's mission and vision several years ahead (Ligon et al., 2014). The research conducted by GAO revealed that leading organizations that focused on using succession planning as a strategic planning tool were able to align the current and future needs of the organization (GAO, 2003). This relates to the OPM recommendation that the strategic alignment process should include conducting a SWOT (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats) analysis in conjunction with scenario planning, which yields a strategic alignment report (OPM, 2017). This report ensures that succession planning for the organization is mission-driven and based on agreed-upon goals and priorities (ASTHO, 2008). In addition to the strategic plan, Wilson's (2005) model emphasized that an action plan that includes workforce planning should also be considered a core component of the succession plan.

Best practices for succession planning begin with a commitment from the top leaders and extends throughout the organization as a critical strategic initiative (Rothwell, 2016; Wilson, 2015). This is a parallel effort that occurs as part of the strategic planning process and continues throughout the cycle to ensure top management (Grooves, 2017) and stakeholder engagement.

Active engagement and buy-in from this group guarantee that leadership and stakeholders understand, support, and are committed to the organization's mission and vision.

The connection between strategic planning, succession planning, leadership, and stakeholder commitment ensures that the organization's objectives are mission-driven and follow goals and priorities that have been agreed upon by leadership. However, for this to be effective, best practices need to include dedicated funding and staffing resources crucial for the organization to effectively implement and operate (GAO, 2003). Best practices also point to ensuring that a SWOT analysis is conducted because it identifies the organization's current and future workforce needs (OPM, 2017), which is necessary for long-term organizational planning. All these objectives are tied to succession planning initiatives, should be incorporated into long-term goals of strategic plans (five-years or longer), and provide a broader perspective that is updated regularly for accountability (ASTHO, 2008; GAO, 2003). Best practices that can be incorporated at this stage for strategic planning include:

- Identifying the long-term vision and direction of the organization (OPM, 2017)
- Developing a strategy formulation for succession planning – one that connects the succession plan to the organizational goals and values (ASTHO, 2008; Ligon, 2014)
- Securing active support and buy-in of top leadership (ASTHO, 2008; GAO, 2003; OPM, 2017)
- Securing funding and dedicated staff to implement, operationalize, and sustain the succession planning process (GAO, 2003).

Workforce Analysis and Competency Modeling

Regarding workforce analysis, the organization should document procedures on the minimum requirements for all key positions. This creates a transparent career path that allows

employees to evaluate their qualifications and seek opportunities to gain the necessary skills, education, and experience to qualify for other opportunities (Payne, 2018). These procedures also help with employee commitment and retention because they allow the employees to envision how they fit within the organization and their long-term career goals (Ligon, 2014). The analysis components rest in evaluating the current workforce supply against the demands. The gap analysis then focuses on comparing the supply and demand to identify workforce gaps as a precursor to the development of a plan to meet the future workforce needs (Carnevale et al., 2015; Society for Human Resource Management [SHRM], 2015; Spetz, 2015; Tucker, 2020; Vogelsang, 2014).

OPM suggests that this assessment provides valuable information for succession planning and helps an organization understand the trends impacting its current workforce (OPM, 2017). By identifying key leadership and professional positions and assessing needed skills, this step detects key positions that have the most significant impact on achieving organizational strategic goals and objectives (Groves, 2007) and facilitates the selection of the right talent when vacancies occur. While this analysis is consistent with the first step (Strategic Planning), the findings from OPM recommend that it focus more on the mission-critical occupations and include distinctive information about the demographics and background characteristics of the current workforce, retirement eligibility, turnover, and various workforce management issues, such as recruitment and retention (OPM). Combining this data with competencies and career profiling data can enhance the agency's ability to match employees with development opportunities and organizational needs (ASTHO, 2008). Best practices for the workforce analysis phase include:

- Combining and collecting workforce analysis data with competencies to assess the current workforce situation (ASTHO, 2008).
- Creating characteristics of the organization's workforce profile. The basic workforce statistics that are created identify the current state of the organization and what is likely to happen over the coming years (ASTHO, 2008).
- Identifying valuable workforce data using tools and resources to calculate workforce trends information such as retirement projections, turnover statistics, trend analysis data on current vacancies, age, and length of service for current employees (ASTHO, 2008).

At the leadership level, the United States Strategic Command (STRATCOM) suggests that developing a comprehensive analytics and metrics program can help organizations capture meaningful and actionable metrics for their talent management and workforce development programs. These metrics that STRATCOM uses align with the organizational mission and strategic objectives, which provide meaningful data and lead to actionable results (Ligon et al., 2014). Although the metrics for STRATCOM are specific to leadership development, they can be used to examine and track all employee development efforts through instruments such as employee Individual Development Plans (IDPs) or Professional Development Plans (PD). Furthermore, when properly designed, the metrics can be used to create talent pools of leaders who exemplify a track record of developing future leaders and internal talent to facilitate succession planning (Ligon et al., 2014). In addition, they provided the added benefit of employee commitment and retention strategies.

Competency Modeling

Competency modeling is a sub-component of the workforce analysis. It is a process designed to help the agency identify core and technical competency models essential for the organization's mission. Data for competency modeling can be conducted using focus groups and surveys. Identifying competencies should be part of succession planning and should focus on choosing the necessary abilities for the current and future workforce needs (Ibarra, 2005). The outcome provides the organization with documentation on competency models and job analysis that can be adopted. According to OPM, this is critical for identifying gaps and developing the right initiatives for the organization to adopt (OPM, 2017).

Competency Gap Analysis

A competency gap analysis includes an assessment of the competencies and the identification of the organization's current proficiency gaps. Results of this analysis provide information about the competency gaps in the workforce when done correctly. Ibarra (2005) highlighted the importance of competencies being integrated into the organization's performance management system and tying it back to employee training, development, and compensation systems (Ibarra, 2005) to address and minimize the competency gap. Best practices for competency modeling and identifying gap analysis include:

- Assessing individuals for job competencies that are a level or more above their current position (ASTHO, 2009; Weisman, 2016)
- Assessing individuals for learning agility (an individual's readiness and ability to learn from experiences and be adaptive to changing environments; OPM, 2017; Weisman, 2016)
- Determining the current supply and anticipated demand of the workforce

- Determining talent pools that will be needed to backfill for the long term.

A model that was adopted in the ASTHO Succession Planning Guide for State Health Agencies describes providing employees with opportunities for hands-on experience in the form of special work assignments, such as task force leadership that encourages the employee to focus on developing competencies not part of their current job but are important for a future position (ASTHO, 2008). This approach is similar to General Electric's (GE) approach, which thrives on developing strong talent through a rotation of a wide range of roles and assignments that allow for the well-rounded development of aspiring talent into leadership positions. These rotations are meaningful and include stretch assignments that provide opportunities for mentorship, coaching, and feedback and have been identified as some of the best ways to build agile and curious leaders (Alleman, 2017). The practice is ingrained in GE's leadership, and managers are trained to recognize that they will not move up if they have not developed multiple successors. This is a prime example of succession planning at its best because, as a result, GE has not had to fill essential senior roles externally due to the organization's ability to prepare and train internal staff to transition into positions seamlessly.

Selection and Identification

Once organizations have identified the mission-critical positions that need to be filled in the event of attrition (strategic plan) and identified the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for success in the role (workforce analysis), the third critical step for developing robust succession planning processes includes finding candidates with the potential and motivation to fill such roles identified in the preceding two phases (Ligon et al., 2014). This selection and identification step involves a careful review of an employee's skills, talents, and performance plans along with consideration for the candidate's personal career aspirations (Ligon et al., 2014;

OPM, 2017), a collective assessment of these components' attributes to selecting qualified candidates ready for leadership grooming. The selection of these candidates is often based on performance reviews, other feedback, and management recommendations (Groves, 2007). Best practices in the private sector defer to this process for identifying candidates for leadership development because it often moves the process ahead quickly by narrowing the potential candidates (Groves, 2007). The alternative is to offer an open program that lets employees self-select through an application process, which provides an expansive pool for leadership development (Groves, 2007). An open, self-selection process identifies employees who would not have emerged from an appointment process but demonstrate real leadership potential and offers the greatest potential for developing future leaders to fill future vacancies (Groves, 2007). The process that offers opportunities to the largest number of employees committed to the organization should be the preferred choice.

Groves (2017) examined models of succession management practices used in healthcare that can be adapted in public health practices. These models provided talent assessment practices, including processes for identifying or assessing high-potential leaders and successors for critical positions, as well as formal processes for socializing and developing successors for such roles (Grooves, 2017). In addition, this process should consider a needs assessment that examines fairness, inclusion, diversity, and equity of the candidates who are identified and selected for the future pool of talent for the organization. In the end, the responsibility for the identification and selection of the most effective candidates belongs to Human Resources (HR) and those serving in leadership roles such as team leads or department heads because they can identify candidates who are ready to be groomed. For the selection and identification process, human capital staff should be engaged and committed and take responsibility for identifying

motivated individuals and discerning candidates' intention to stay with the organization.

Ultimately, employee commitment is considered as part of the continuous process for effective succession planning. Also, team leads or department heads should take responsibility for evaluating candidates' technical competence and assessing their technical potential. The following are best practices for ensuring that organizations are selecting and identifying the right candidates:

- It begins at the entry-level with the recruitment efforts and partnering with the right human capital experts/HR (Ligon, 2014).
- Organizations should consider non-traditional methods for recruiting and engaging the right candidates for entry-level positions by utilizing more innovative best practices programs like the Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy (EPIP) program that creates opportunities to attract new talent to the public sector (deBeaumont Foundation, 2014). An approach similar to this helps deliver a strong, talented pipeline for an organization's succession planning and can be part of the organization's succession management program.

Other specific best practices for selecting and identifying candidates and developing a talent pool should include:

- creating student internships or practicums as a means of identifying high-performing individuals for entry-level positions (deBeaumont Foundation, 2014; Weisman, 2016)
- identifying high-performing and talented employees from the workforce (Weisman, 2016).
- creating lists of individuals to be developed for higher-level positions (OPM, 2017).
- identifying recruitment and retention strategies (OPM, 2017).

- developing training and initiatives for fairness and equity as a part of the organization's strategic plan (Human Resources Today, 2020).

Formal processes through which high-potential leaders and successors to critical leadership roles are identified using standardized assessment instruments, including the nine-box grids and other leadership assessment tools (Grooves, 2017). OPM recommends that organizations determine the appropriate development strategies for aspiring leaders, such as planned job assignments, formal development, coaching, mentoring, assessment and feedback, action learning projects, communities of practice, and shadowing as components for creating a talent pool. To do this effectively, organizations should clearly describe in their succession plans how they will offer broad, experiential opportunities to ensure wide exposure (e.g., risk-intense, high-responsibility development experiences, cross-organizational or cross-functional development opportunities), and they should also provide the appropriate training experiences (e.g., classroom, web-based) for professional development (OPM, 2017; Payne, 2018). Transparency is critical at this stage, and systems should be in place to capture, manage, and facilitate clear mechanisms on how current leaders will transfer their knowledge to the talent pools (e.g., communities of practice, legacy systems, technology-based knowledge management system) (OPM, 2017; Payne, 2018).

Lastly, organizations should be intentional about the development of the selected individuals. These activities should be intended to prepare promising individuals for a transition into new positions and leadership roles, but careful not to guarantee future promotions. Instead, they should remind employees about their commitment to the organization and the opportunities that lie ahead (Groves, 2007), promoting retention. Vital to succession planning is matching emerging leaders with predicted leadership roles, not specific positions (Groves, 2007).

Preparation and Promotion

The fourth step of the framework involves implementing knowledge capture and transfer strategies in conjunction with various techniques that may be modified based on organizational needs. Essential to this step is the ability to ensure systematic knowledge transfer from one generation to the next. This step builds on the preceding step and concentrates on developing and preparing the employee for promotion. Developing individuals requires a commitment to extensive training and comprehensive leadership development programs geared towards preparing them to assume a role or position (Ligon et al., 2014). Ibarra (2005) stated that when thinking about succession planning, many areas in which employees need to improve or increase their capabilities are not resolved by taking training or a workshop. Instead, through opportunities such as job shadowing, job rotation assignments, mentoring, coaching, and task force assignments, opportunities are used to encourage the sharing of key knowledge (Branham, 2011; Payne, 2018; Rothwell, 2010; Trepanier, 2013) and are vital to individual development. Prospects such as these can enhance an employee's capabilities to create room for knowledge sharing, workforce development, and leadership talent development, ensuring a more robust succession plan (Payne, 2018), especially when organizations experience unexpected vacancies.

Finally, tracking and monitoring the selected individuals to ensure that they are on the right path with individual development plans or professional development plans and ready to seamlessly transition into the roles they are groomed to take on is important to this stage. HR contributions are also critical at this stage because, in most cases, they are responsible for tracking the analytics and metrics that are used to describe an employee effectively (Ligon et al., 2014). Best practices for preparation and promotion include:

- creating knowledge incubators to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills through mentoring and job rotations, and project-based learning employees (Ligon et al., 2014).
- providing rotations through jobs in various parts of the organization or agency that encourage lateral moves specifically to develop the employee (OPM, 2017; Payne, 2018; Weisman, 2016).
- identifying cross-functional projects, task forces, or teams for the employees to serve on specifically to develop their knowledge, skills, and abilities, especially for technical and management leadership training (Weisman, 2016).
- purposively assigning high-performing employees to stretch projects/assignments to develop their knowledge, skills, or ability (Weisman, 2016).
- conducting 360° feedback assessments for employees as a tool to help them identify areas of growth (Ligon, 2014; OPM, 2017; Weisman, 2016).
- developing individualized development plans (IDPs) or professional development plans (PDs) with employees specific to their preparation for new positions in the agency (Ligon, 2014; OPM, 2017)

The Emerging Leaders Program, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is an example of a successful program. It focuses on identifying potential leaders in public health and offering them information and skill-building experiences to develop the confidence needed to take on leadership roles. For example, the Minnesota Emerging Leaders network (part of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Program) uses characteristics of emerging leaders to groom individuals who show potential to grow into a leader and who have the aspirations to accept leadership responsibilities. Similarly, the Department of Energy (DOE) developed a 12-month

Mentoring Program designed to foster leadership development, expand employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities, and broaden their understanding of DOE and its missions and programs. One of the immediate benefits of developing such a program is the cost-effectiveness for leadership development and the added benefit of recruiting and retaining a talented and diverse workforce, resulting in an improved succession plan (OPM, 2017).

Payne et al. (2018) discovered that for frontline/technical level staff, this process should involve creating tools and resources like knowledge binders, low-tech job aids that are simple tools used to capture and transfer tacit and explicit information. This facilitates job rotations and job shadowing and is intended to be kept in a highly visible area at a key employee's workstation. The knowledge binders may include professional contact information, meeting dates and times, collaborations, coalitions, and committees, forms, templates, department-specific information, projects, grants, office supplies and materials, accounting/budgeting, and performance evaluation dates. The job shadowing aspect is a method that allows for knowledge capture and transfer that is useful to allow others within the organization to observe and participate in activities to ensure the capture of knowledge related to a particular key position (Atwood, 2007; Rothwell, 2010). However, these methods are more resource-intensive, requiring time, money, and people to succeed (Payne, 2018). Thus, effective succession planning programs use various approaches to maximize opportunities to respond to different learning styles and a pool of candidates (Groves, 2007). Implementation and evaluation are two key components that ensure fidelity of the succession planning process and are therefore incorporated into each step of the process.

Implementation

In this phase, the leader takes on the responsibility to ensure that knowledge transfer is occurring, effective coaching and mentoring of the emerging employee or leader is frequent through transition, and that the leader also serves as an advisor to the individuals in the grooming process (Ligon et al., 2014). Organizations should also develop clear implementation steps to move from a solid foundation to an action plan, drawing on succession planning processes that are already in action. During this phase, succession planning committees and workgroups (stakeholder engagement) can help lead the effort and encourage employee buy-in/commitment (ASTHO, 2008). At the implementation stage, organizations should establish the responsibility for succession planning and take ownership and accountability of the process at an individual, agency, or employee level to ensure continued attention to succession planning (ASTHO, 2008). More importantly, the organization should address specific human capital challenges, including diversity, leadership capacity, and retention. The succession planning process should continue to support existing human resources values and goals, including attracting and developing underrepresented populations and including cultural competence as a desired leadership skill (ASTHO, 2008). Best practices for implementation include:

- linking the strategic planning and succession planning implementation into action by engaging the stakeholders, committees, and workgroups (GAO, 2003)
- implementing strategies for maintaining senior-level commitment (GAO, 2003; OPM, 2017)
- implementing recruitment and retention strategies (GAO, 2003)
- implementing development/learning strategies (GAO, 2003)
- determining and applying measures of success (GAO, 2003; Ligon, 2014)

- linking succession planning to HR processes (GAO, 2003).

ASTHO used the Alabama Department of Public Health as an example for the successful implementation of succession planning. The health department achieved this objective by shifting the responsibilities of the process to a workforce development committee supported by external partnerships with their local school of public health and state personnel who assisted with implementation strategies (ASTHO, 2008). In this approach, committee members were assigned and met with senior staff in critical disciplines, reviewed competency requirements and staff training needs, and met with state personnel for additional resources and assistance. As a result, multiple strategies have been implemented due to the committee's oversight, including educational leave, supervisorial management training, online recruitment, and new employee orientation enhancements.

Evaluation

Once local government managers implement their succession plans, it is imperative that they monitor the progress, evaluate the implementation, and revise the plans as needed (Ibarra, 2005) since this phase examines the return on the investment. Evaluation is an ongoing process that involves developing and evaluating metrics to track and measure the progress, effectiveness, and significance of mission-critical leadership development and succession programs.

Organizations can select metrics to focus on time-to-fill, turnover rate, turnover costs, and internal versus external hires (Payne 2018; Rothwell, 2010). Although many agencies consider simply having a succession plan and program in place, given the challenges of succession management, organizations should still develop metrics to track and measure the progress, effectiveness, and significance of their mission-critical leadership development and succession programs (GAO, 2003; Grooves, 2017; Ligon, 2014; Tucker, 2020).

All dimensions of the succession planning framework and process should be reviewed and evaluated regularly to assess progress, measure results, and refine the process. Evaluation should monitor progress on developing future leaders, including frontline staff seeking transitions to effectively track how many leadership and critical positions are being filled with internal candidates identified and prepared through the succession planning process (Groves, 2007). Best practices for evaluation begin with the agency leaders and stakeholders (committees and workgroups) developing meaningful, clear, and concise indicators and metrics that are used to collect and analyze the data points (Ligon, 2014). The information provides evidence-based data, justification, and clarification on progress, trends, and effectiveness of the succession planning activities. Best practices for evaluation include:

- evaluation of employees' performance against their development plan, putting evaluation in writing and verbally discussing it with the employee
- tracking and validation of individual development plans
- tracking and validation of steps of the succession planning process.

An example of evaluation measures time-to-fill by assessing vacancy gaps, from the first day a position is vacant until the first day a successor is in place, and then evaluating the associated increased costs related to a decrease in productivity (ASTHO, 2008). However, public health organizations often face challenges such as budget cuts, hiring freezes, and sequestration that directly impact the prioritization and implementation of succession planning activities. Nonetheless, when included in the organizational strategic plan, they should permit HR staff to use quantitative and qualitative metrics as part of their analysis to process feedback and leadership, conducting exit interviews that effectively assess transitions in the organizations. Organizations should also thrive on the transparency of the entire process and create

organization-wide forums (e.g., leadership academy) that reinforce transparency and expose high potential candidates.

Critical to the integrated framework are the cross-cutting elements crucial for continuous development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Leadership-buy-in ensures that leaders in the organization support the process and believe in the value that it contributes to the organization. Stakeholder engagement is critical to the process because their involvement and support of the strategic and succession plan contribute to its stability and sustainability (Hannon, 2014). Ensuring that that organization incorporates activities and programs that actively evaluate strategies for increasing the talent pool and strengthening the public health workforce pipeline is beneficial towards a systematic approach to knowledge transfer (Harper, 2018). Transparency facilitates clear communication channels about the entire process from leadership to the frontline employees. Finally, essential to the cross-cutting elements is ensuring that equity and fairness are always considered in the organization's strategic and succession planning. When combined with the domains, these cross-cutting elements guarantee that the framework is functional.

Results from the Checklist

Finally, as part of the sixth step of the scoping review process, a checklist (Figure 4) was developed from the integrated framework's six domains. The checklist was shared with 11 SMEs from three local public health districts consisting of 15 counties, and nine out of eleven of the SMEs completed the checklist. The SMEs included directors of human resources, nursing and environmental health, and district epidemiologists. The SMEs reviewed and validated the relevance and applicability of the checklist for their respective districts. While reviewing the checklist, the SMEs also completed the checklist. They had an opportunity to provide feedback in the form of comments to indicate if the checklist's best practices were not applicable. None of

the SMEs indicated that the checklist was non-applicable, suggesting that the guidelines could be applied in their LHDs. The SMEs' feedback provided preliminary data into the extent of succession planning the three LHD in Georgia, which is described next.

Figure 4

Succession Planning Checklist

Succession Readiness Questions	Yes	Some what	No
Strategic and Succession Planning			
1. Does your organization have a strategic plan? <i>[If you answer no to this question continue to Q4]</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Does the strategic plan include a succession plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Is the plan formal (documented) and accessible to staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Is the plan transparent and clearly communicated to all staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workforce Analysis			
5. Does your organization conduct any exercises to analyze its current workforce?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Does your organization conduct any exercises to analyze its future workforce needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Does your organization assess and evaluate staff core competencies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Does your organization assess and evaluate staff technical competencies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Selection and Identification			
9. Does your organization have professional development (PD) plans? <i>[If you answer no to this question continue to Q.11]</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Do the plans include a transparent career path/trajectory?
11. Do you complete the professional development (PD) plans annually?
12. Does your organization have recruitment plans or strategies in place?
13. Does your organization have retention plans or strategies in place?

Preparation for Promotion

14. Does your organization offer any of the following: (*Please select all that apply*)?
[If you answer no to this question – you have completed the checklist]
- a. Planned job assignments
- b. Formal development
- c. Coaching or Mentoring
- d. Assessment and Feedback
- e. Action learning projects
- f. Communities of practice
- g. Shadowing
15. If yes, is this documented in your professional development (PD) plan?
16. Have you participated in any of these programs in your organization?

Implementation

17. Does your organization have an implementation plan that maps or outlines an implementation process of the strategic plan?
[If you answer no to this question continue – you have completed the checklist]
- Is the succession planning process connected to your organization Human Resources (HR) processes?

Evaluation

- Does your organization have an evaluation plan that plainly describes what success looks like?
18. Does your organization gather satisfaction surveys on succession planning from employees, and stakeholders?
19. Does your organization gather satisfaction surveys on workforce development from employees, and stakeholders?
20. Do you have any comments that you would like to share?

The following results emerged from the feedback of the eleven SMEs from the three health districts; the results are described in a sequence of the framework's domains. In response to questions about the strategic and succession plan (Figure 5), more than half (67%) of the SMEs indicated that their organization had a strategic plan in place. Half (50%) of the SMEs indicated that the strategic plan was formal. Sixty-seven percent of the SMEs stated that their organizations' strategic plans included a succession plan, but the plan was not widely distributed and transparently communicated to the staff.

In the second domain about workforce analysis, the feedback (Figure 6) implied that health departments were primarily focused on the assessments and evaluations of the current staff's core and technical competencies. There was significantly less emphasis; 13% focused on analyzing the future workforce needs of the organization. The following domain on selection and identification (Figure 7-9) asked the SMEs to provide feedback regarding professional development plans and organizational recruitment and retention strategies essential for the workforce's talent pool and bench strength. Over half of the respondents of SMEs (63%) indicated that their organization did not have professional development plans, while 25% stated the contrary. Of those SMEs who stated they had PDs, over half (67%) indicated that they

complete the plans annually. SMEs feedback indicated that recruitment and retention plans were not clearly established.

In this same domain, SMEs were also asked to provide feedback about whether their PDs included a transparent career trajectory. Sixty-seven percent of the SMEs stated that the PDs did not define a transparent career path. This is a significant finding because, in the following domain that focused on preparation for promotion (Figure 10), when SMEs were asked to provide feedback about the types of professional development and training opportunities that their organizations provided, the responses indicated that overall, LHDs were engaged in various training opportunities. The SMEs' feedback in the last two domains on implementation (Figure 9) and evaluation (Figure 5) that are all-encompassing and critical at each domain further highlighted the absence of succession planning at the local level. Eighty percent of the respondents indicated no implementation plan or HR involvement that mapped to the organizational strategic plan. More than 75% of the SMEs indicated no evaluation plan designed to measure or monitor any of the organization's strategic planning activities.

Figure 5

Domain 1: Strategic and Succession Planning

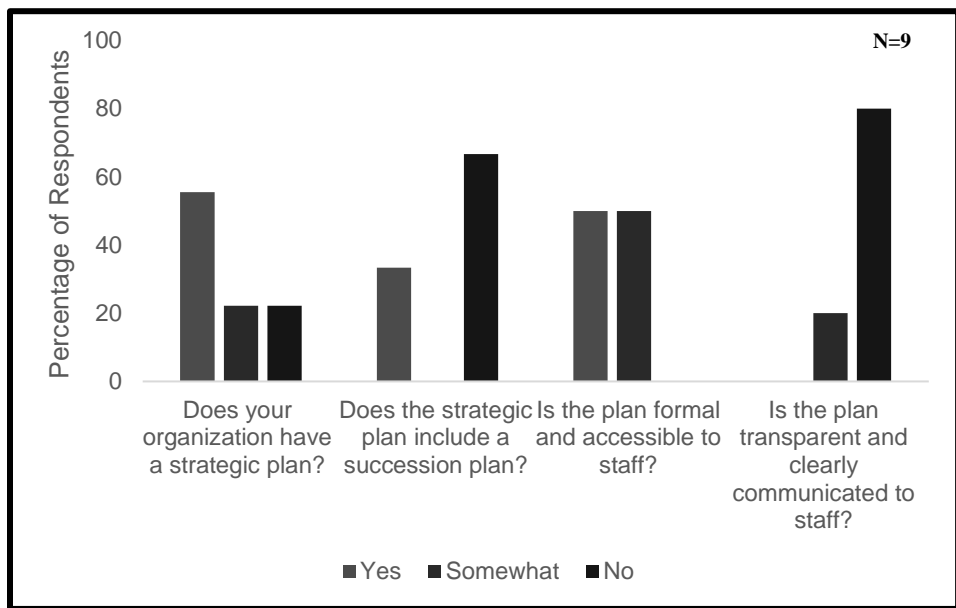


Figure 6

Domain 2: Workforce Analysis

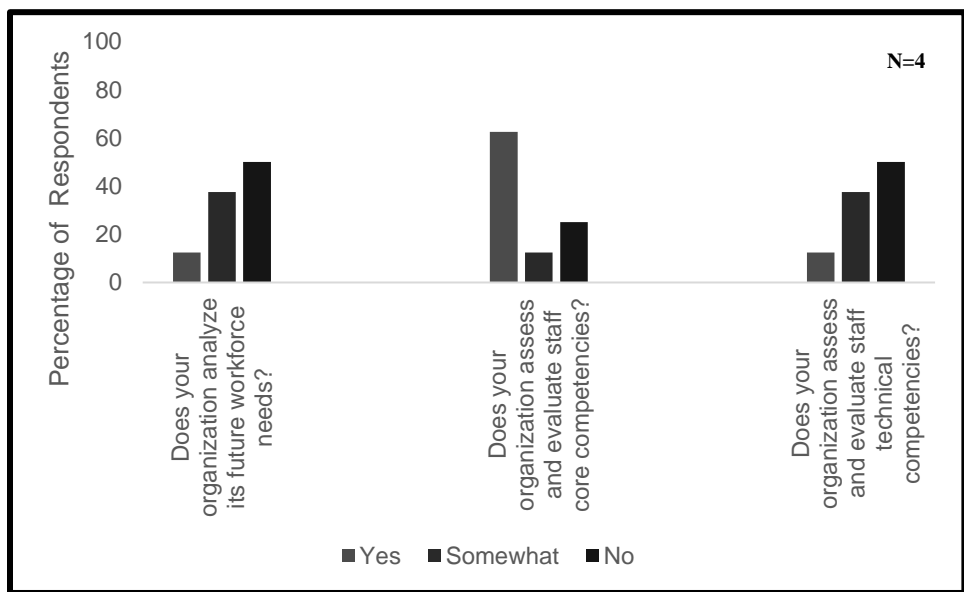


Figure 7

Domain 3: Selection and Identification

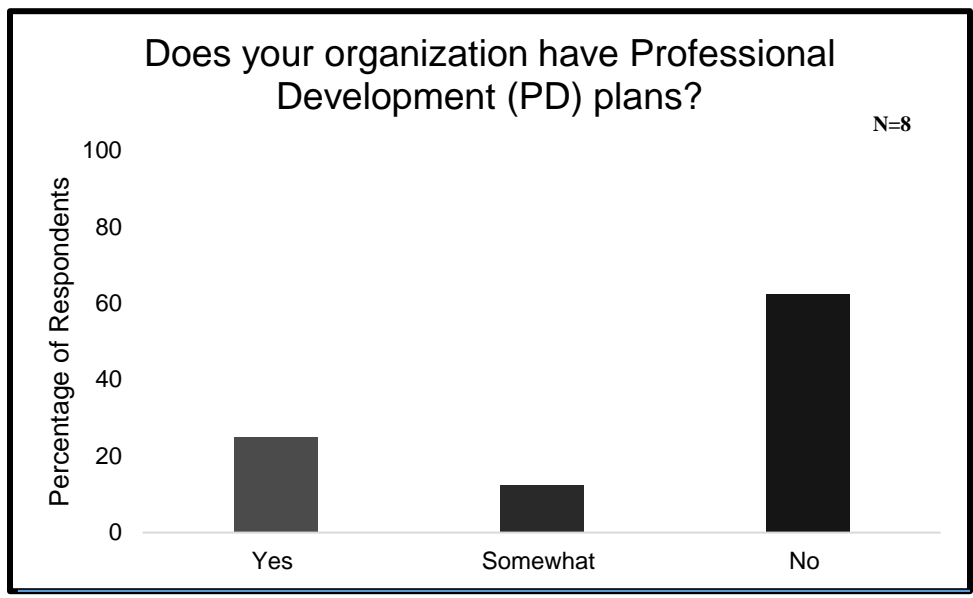


Figure 8

Domain 3: Selection and Identification

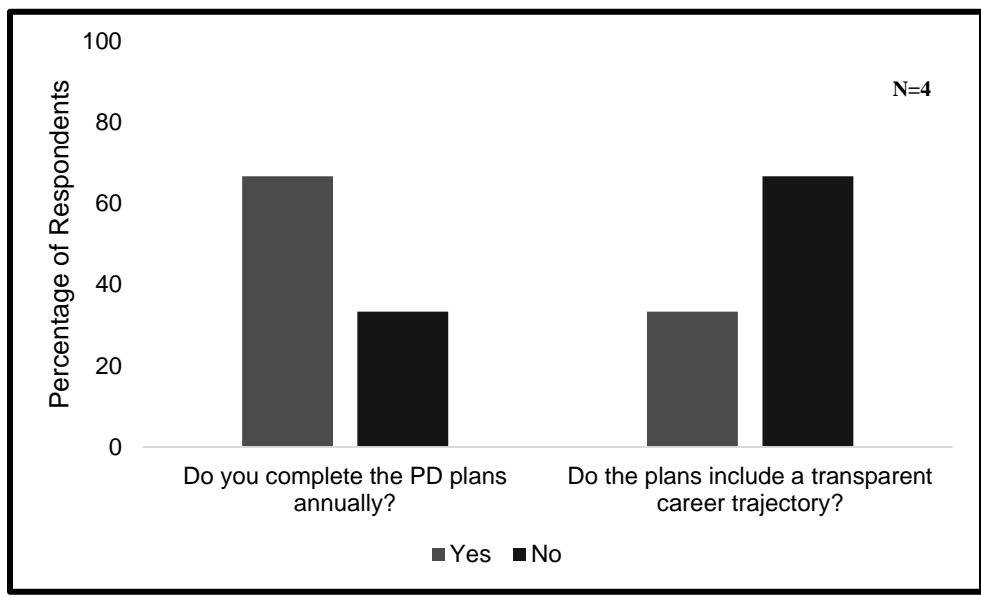


Figure 9

Domain 3: Selection and Identification

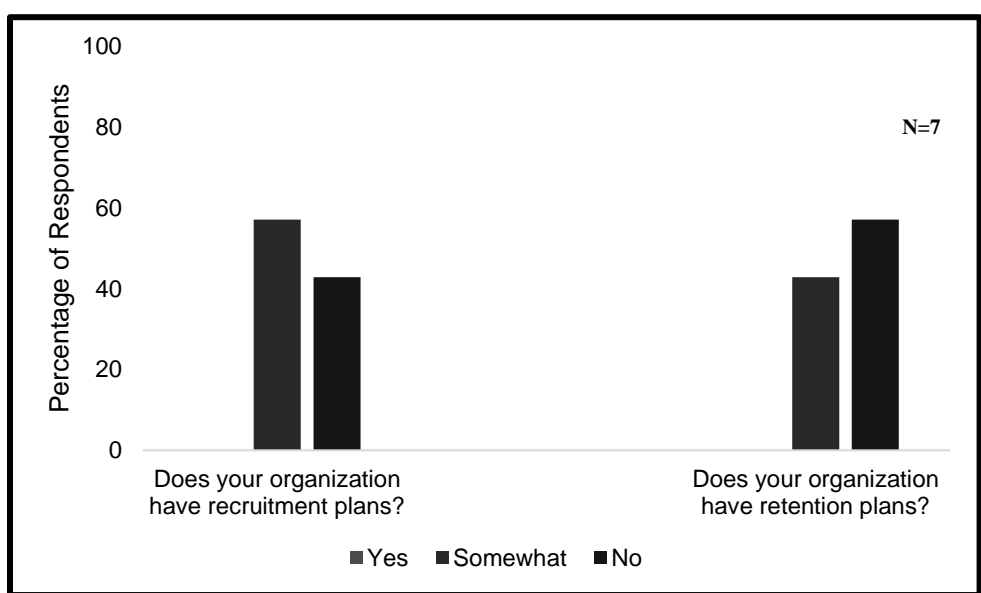


Figure 10

Domain 4: Preparation for Promotion

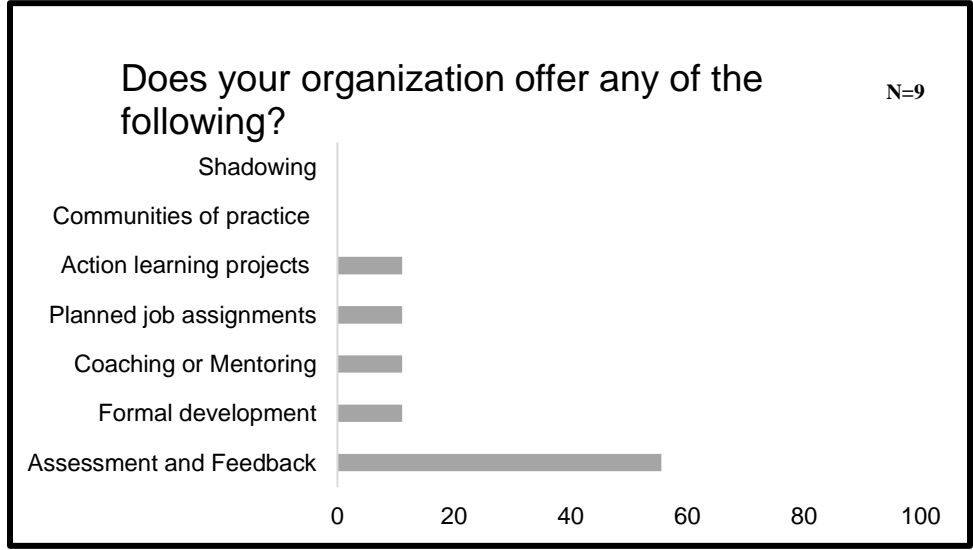


Figure 11

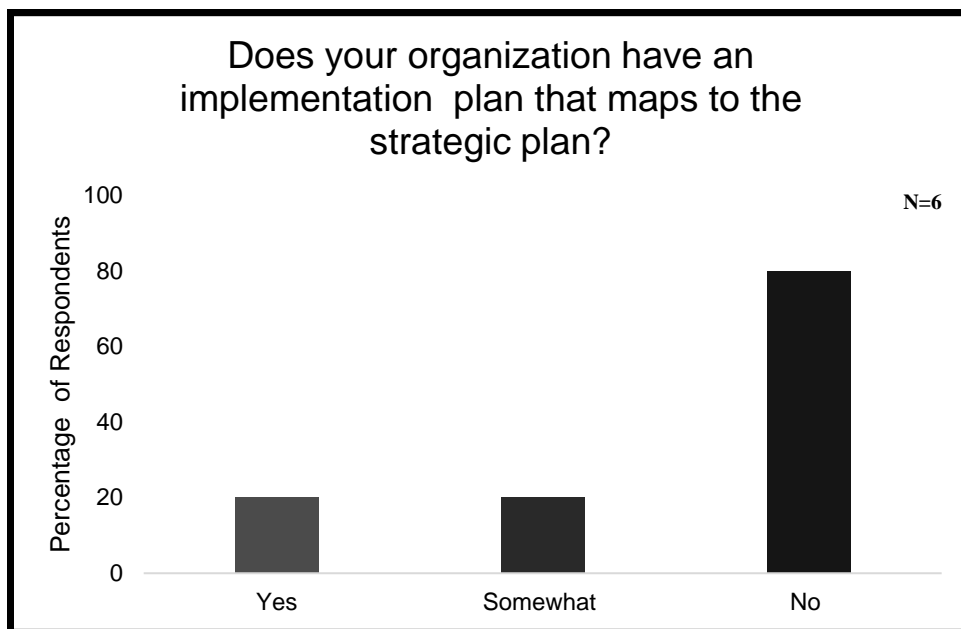
Domain 5: Implementation

Figure 12

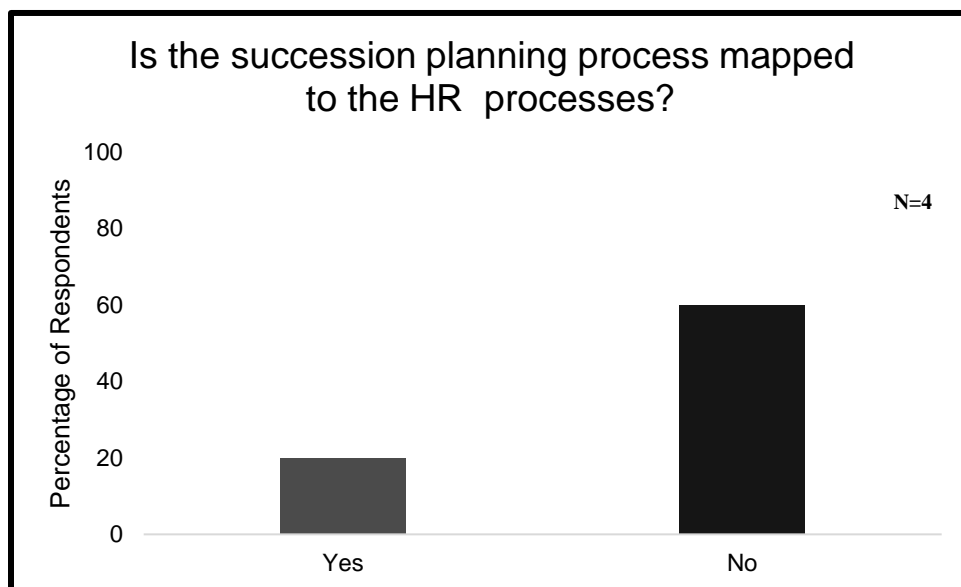
Domain 5: Implementation

Figure 13

Domain 6: Evaluation

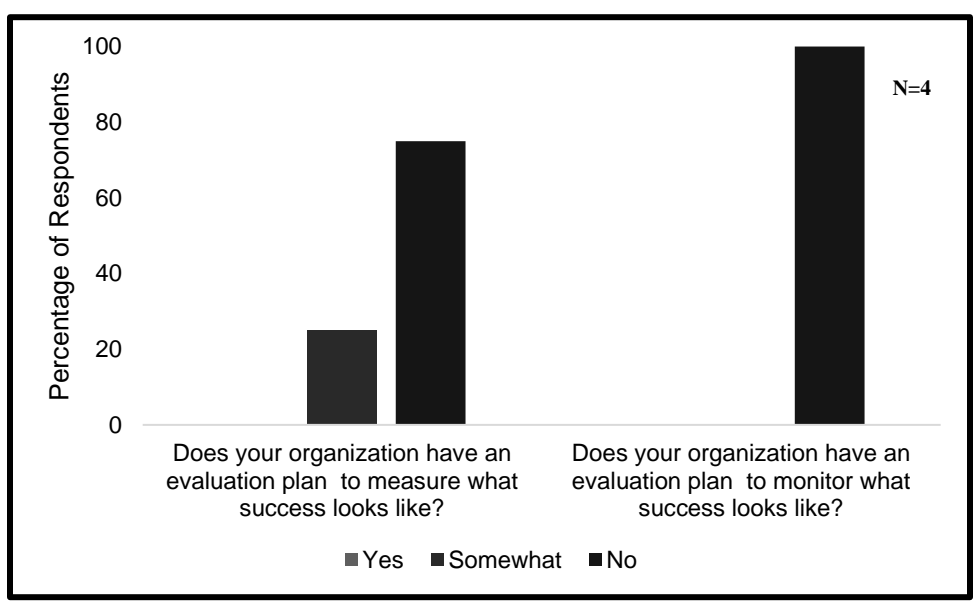
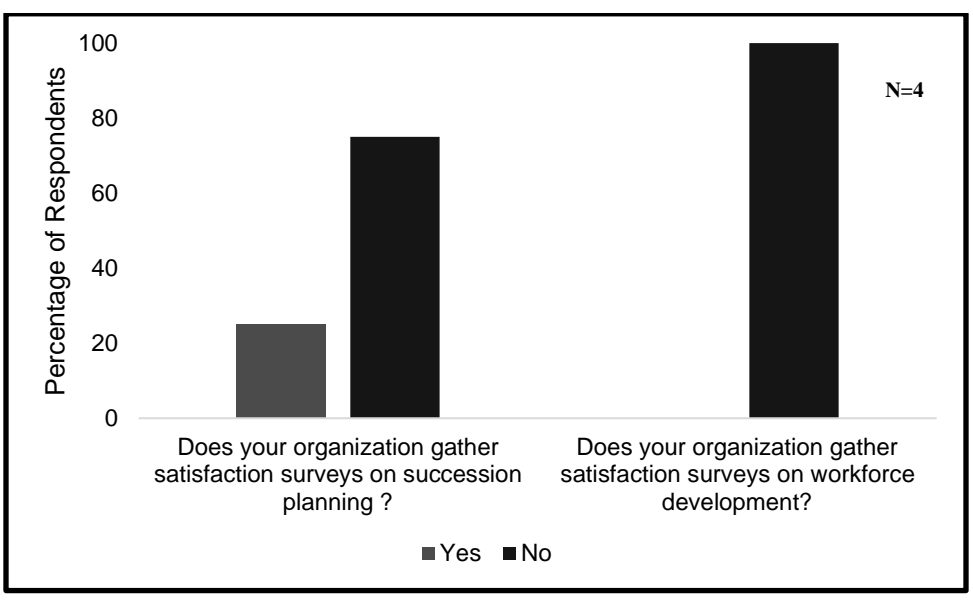


Figure 14

Domain 6: Evaluation



LHD Employee Assessment of Succession Planning within their Organization

A modified version of the checklist was distributed to 400 employees in one large metropolitan health districts in Georgia. This employee version of the checklist eliminated some of the implementation and evaluation steps that were not within the purview of employees. The survey received a 24% response rate, and the outcomes achieved in each domain (described in ensuing paragraphs) were consistent with those of the SMEs.

When LHD staff responded to questions pertaining to the first domain of the integrated framework (Figure 15), 81% of the LHD staff indicated that their organization had a strategic plan, and 77% said that the plan was formal and accessible to staff. In response to whether the strategic plan included a succession plan, approximately half of those who responded (51%) stated that the strategic plan did not have a succession plan and was not effectively communicated to staff (Figure 15).

A large number of the LHD staff for this health district (79%) felt that their organization assessed and evaluated staff core and technical competencies (Figure 16). This included professional development plans that were complete annually. However, only 29% of the LHD staff indicated that their professional development plan had a transparent career path and trajectory, despite the availability of numerous professional and workforce development plans (Figure 17).

Eighty-seven percent of the LHD staff indicated that they participated in workforce development activities offered by their organization, and 63% suggested that their participation in workforce development activities was documented in their professional development plans (Figure 18).

Finally, in response to implementation and evaluation, only 36% of LHD staff indicated that their organization gathered surveys on succession planning, and 55% gathered surveys on workforce development (Figure 19).

Figure 15

Domain 1: Strategic Succession Planning

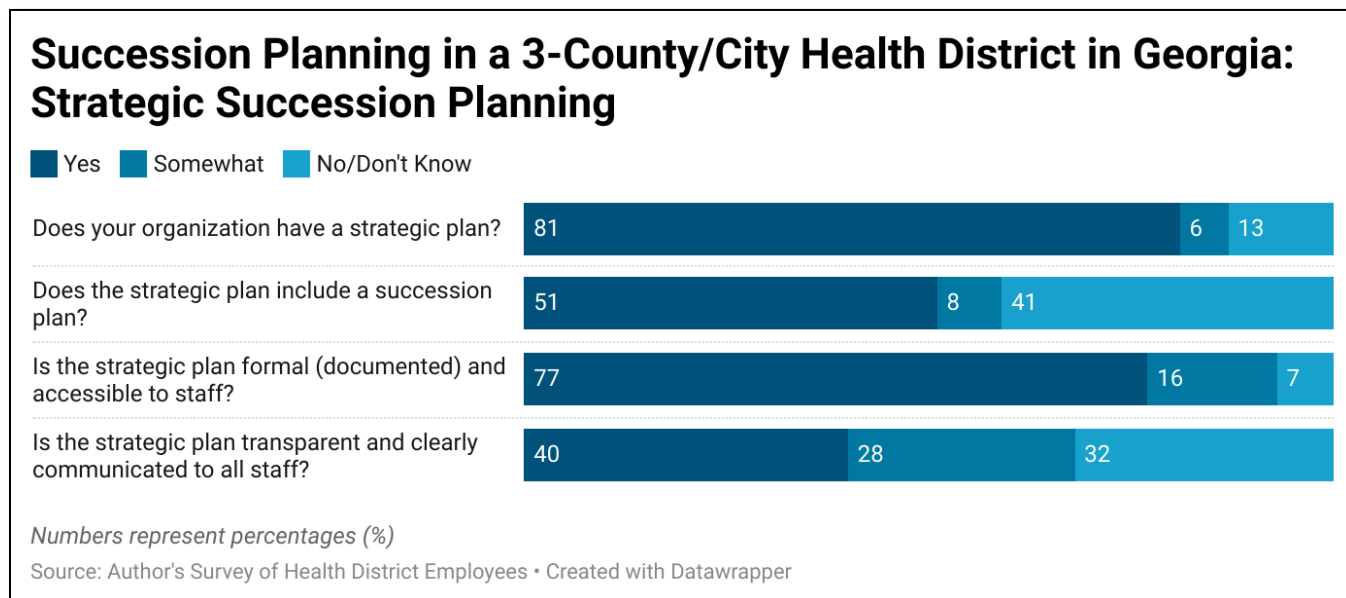


Figure 16

Domain 2: Workforce Analysis

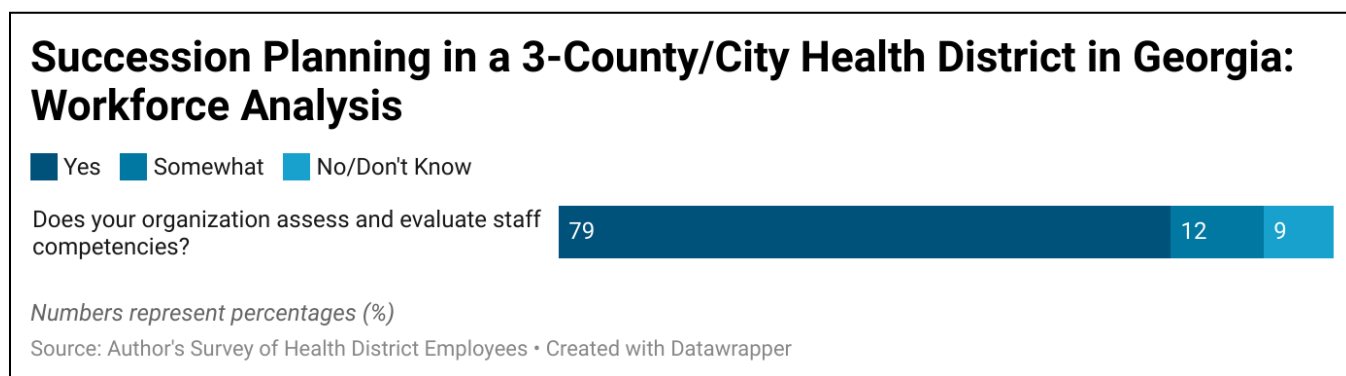


Figure 17

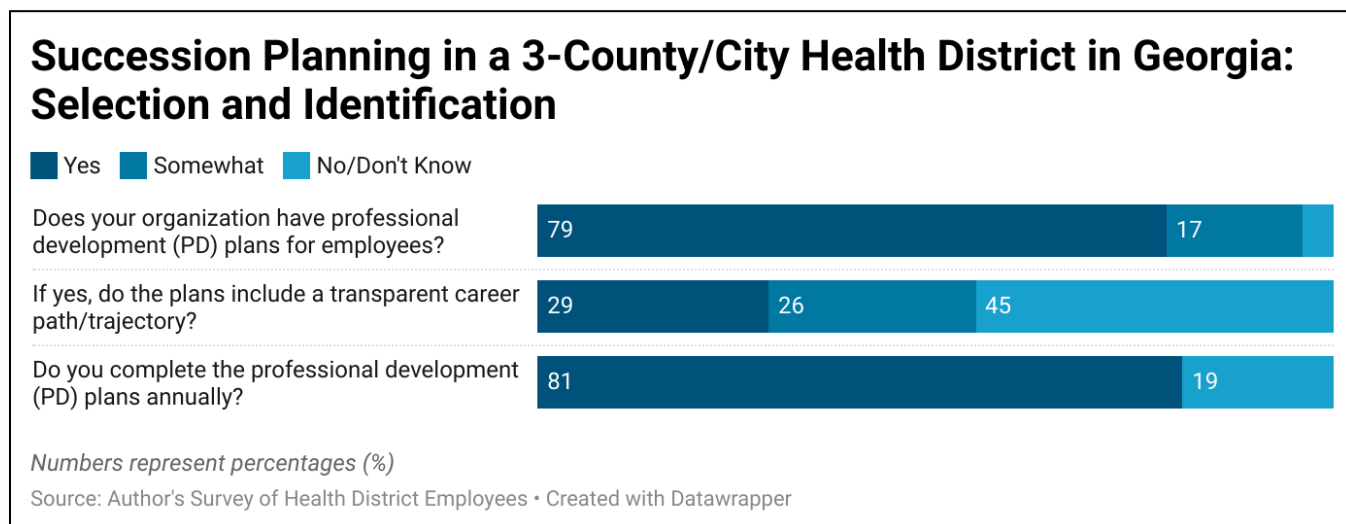
Domain 3: Selection and Identification

Figure 18

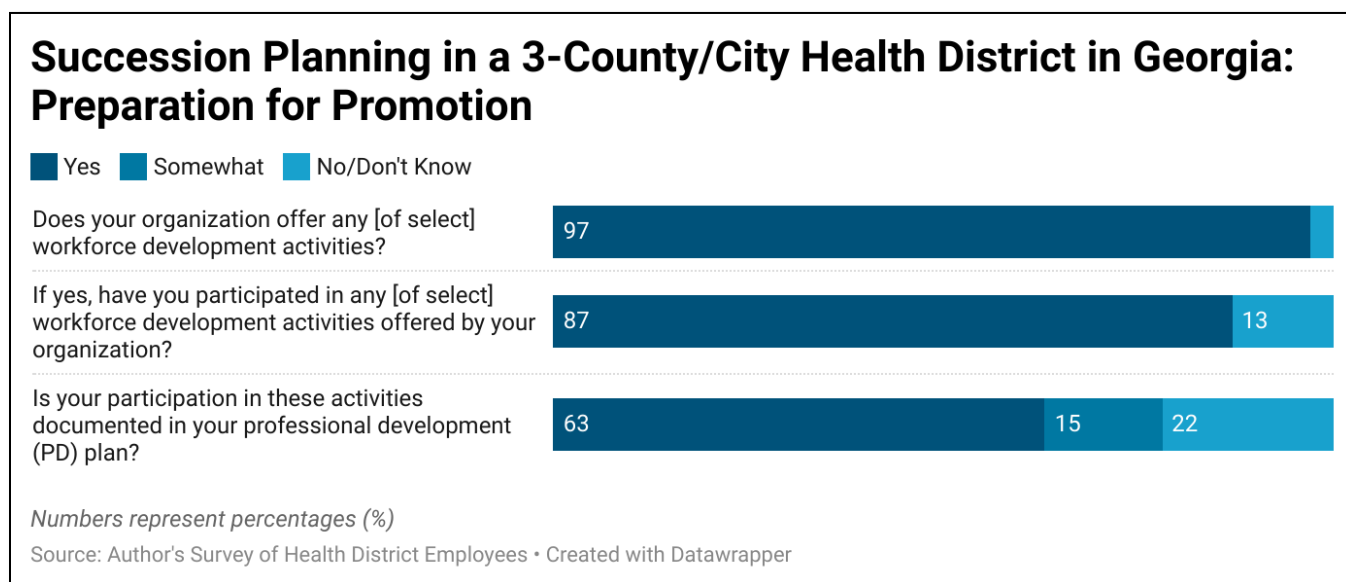
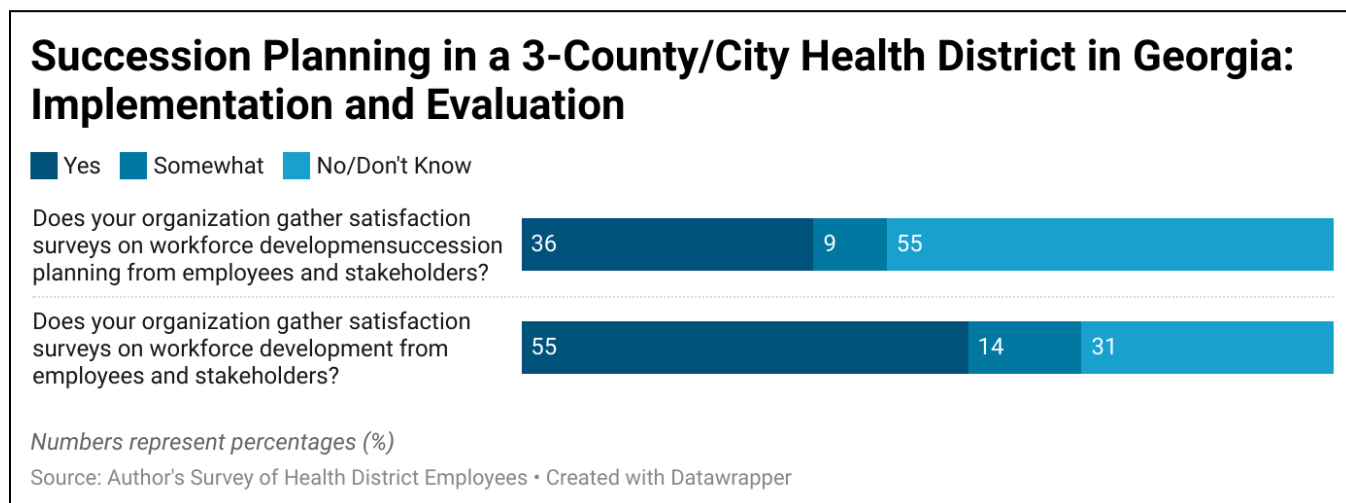
Domain 4: Preparation for Promotion

Figure 19

Domain 5 and 6: Implementation and Evaluation

Overall, the checklist's findings were consistent with the literature on succession planning and implementation in local health departments, further signifying the gap identified and indicating that little to no succession implementation happens at the local level. These findings provided further justification for the development of an integrated framework for succession planning in local health departments and the creation of an associated toolkit (Appendix D) to guide the effective implementation of succession planning in local health departments.

Summary

Overall, succession planning contributes to an organization's continued survival and success by ensuring that replacements have been groomed and prepared to fill vacancies on short notice when voluntary or involuntary separation occurs in the organization. An effective best practices model for integrating succession planning in any organization requires optimal leadership development, management participation, and supportive organizational culture

(Groves, 2007). Building a healthy workforce and leadership pipeline is fundamental to successful succession transitions. The public sector should include the domains outlined in the proposed framework: (1) strategic and succession plan, (2) workforce analysis, (3) selection and identification, and (4) preparation for promotion. Fundamental to each of these domains is implementation and evaluation, which assure continuous fidelity and integration of the framework. Cross-cutting elements critical for the development and implementation of robust succession planning processes include leadership-buy-in, stakeholder engagement, transparency, employee commitment, retention, and a systematic approach to knowledge transfer at minimum to systematically ensure sustainability and longevity. Subsequently, all these efforts should be reviewed and evaluated regularly to assess progress, measure results, and refine the process (ASTHO, 2008). The evaluation process should include monitoring and tracking improvement to determine the succession planning process's effectiveness. Finally, evaluating effectiveness through empirical studies that model program theory and assess knowledge, behavior, and results outcomes is key to measuring any program's real success (Groves, 2007).

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY

While succession planning has been an integral business strategy for identifying and developing future business leaders, healthcare and public health have only recently begun to focus on succession planning as an essential organizational strategy (Tucker, 2020). Several troubling health care industry trends are intensifying the business case for succession management capabilities in health and public health systems (Grooves, 2017). The IBM Institute for Business Value and Human Capital Institute (Ringo et al., 2008) concluded that by comparison with other industries, the healthcare industry is laggard in developing human resource and talent management innovations (Grooves, 2017; Ligon et al., 2014).

Succession planning activities are crucial in operations management and planning in health departments (Harper et al., 2018). However, there has been limited implementation of succession planning activities in public health agencies, primarily because of insufficient funding and adequate resources to dedicate to working on the activities (Harper et al., 2018). To date, a systems-level study on succession planning in-state public health agencies has not been published. Only two studies thus far have characterized succession planning efforts at the local health department level. The first study is a nationally representative study of 255 LHDs conducted by Darnell and Campbell (2017). The second study was conducted in 2016 by Weisman et al. (2016) with Washington State's 35 LHDs. Neither of the findings from the studies reported implementation of agency-wide succession planning.

Rothwell (2001) defines succession planning as a deliberate and systematic effort by an organization to ensure leadership continuity in key positions. However, as indicated in the literature, activities such as succession planning, essential for organizational continuity for public

health, have received limited attention (Darnell & Campbell, 2015; Schall, 1997). Wiesman (2016) demonstrated that LHDs should be required to examine their strategic plans and explore better practices such as succession planning to maintain and improve their workforce capacity. Thus, this study aimed to identify best practices for succession planning that LHDs can adopt and sustain.

To achieve this, the steps outlined in chapter one for this study were carried out, beginning with an overview of why this succession planning is a public health concern. This was followed by a literature review that described succession planning and examined the benefits and challenges of adopting best practices in LHDs. Next, the researcher performed a scoping review guided by the work of Arksey and O'Malley (2005). This process allowed the researcher to identify the breadth and depth of succession studies that have been undertaken over the years to address succession planning in the private and public sectors. The scoping review findings were summarized, and common steps and processes that are essential for succession planning were recommended in an integrated framework developed by the author. The recommended framework can serve as a guide that LHDs can use as a systematic approach for implementation.

This study's findings were consistent with preceding studies regarding the progression of succession planning in LHDs. Limited literature from the public health field provides significant evidence that demonstrates that sustainable succession planning is not fully being adopted and supported in LHDs. Darnell and Campbell (2015) discovered this in the national cross-sectional study about succession planning in LHDs that revealed only 39% of LHDs reported having a succession plan. These findings align with discoveries made by other researchers. For example, Harper (2018) reported that 83% of SHAs indicated that the absence of succession planning in their organizations resulted from a lack of personnel time and resources for the organizations to

dedicate to succession planning. Harper observed that LHDs and SHAs alike were slow to implement succession plans even though agencies like GAO and OPM provide guidelines that can be used to initiate succession planning activities (Harper, 2018). Succession planning programs are minimally implemented in public health organizations because of challenges that are associated with limited financial and human capital resources (Darnell & Campbell, 2016). This proves to be detrimental for the public health workforce, especially when faced with a large graying and retiring population amid a global pandemic.

To fully understand why challenges exist, this study contextualized the significance of the benefits and challenges of succession planning outlined as part of the literature review in Chapter Two. The benefits include efficiency drivers that have result in improved operational continuity, organizational stability, systematic development of leadership competencies, preservation of institutional knowledge, financial stability, increased innovation, and decreased recruitment and orientation costs (Darnell & Campbell, 2015; Harper, 2018). However, despite all the benefits and how critical the public health workforce is, it continues to face challenges such as being significantly underfunded, overwhelmed by competing priorities, employee turnover, and demands that continue to grow (Bogaert, 2019; Hoornbeek, 2019). Other significant challenges mentioned include the knowledge transfer gap created with the aging of the current public health workforce as one generation leaves and another inherits the positions (Leider et al., 2015; Sellers, 2019). Despite all these challenges, Rothwell notes that the benefits of planning for operational continuity and the other succession planning activities by far outweigh the challenges, and organizations do not regret the benefits (Rothwell, 2010). The scoping review substantiated the benefits process and was conducted to examine the breadth and depth of literature on succession planning and better understand how challenges can be

overcome, and recommend methods that can guide LHDs with an approach that can be sustained. While this study scrutinized the literature and recommended an integrated framework, future research still needs to be conducted to help public health fully understand the ongoing benefits and challenges of succession planning. Thus, much work needs to be done, and questions need to be answered to gain a perspective on succession planning and its implications for LHDs.

The activities around succession planning and individual development are fundamental to an organization's success and longevity (Harper et al., 2018; Rothwell, 2010; Schall, 1997; Sellers, 2019). LHDs that are faced with multi-faceted challenges and barriers that prevent them from initiating any succession planning activities should, at a minimum, take the time to examine their workforce by conducting workforce analysis as indicated in the integrated framework. This can be an initial step towards understanding an organization's current workforce status and determining future workforce needs.

Study Limitations

The first limitation is that this study conducted a scoping review of the best practices for succession planning in the literature; however, the scoping review established some inclusion and exclusion criteria. While the study examined an expanded breadth and depth of literature, some literature and studies may probably have been inadvertently excluded from the pool selected because of the parameters set by this study. Therefore, it may be challenging to guarantee that LHDs were adequately represented, and some LHDs that engage in succession planning may not be characterized in the literature.

A second limitation of this study is that the sample size was relatively small and consisted of SMEs from LHDs in Georgia. Therefore, there is a likelihood that if this study were to be replicated and specified to a locality, the conclusions would yield alternative results. The

third limitation is compounded in the notion of the potential for individual bias with the checklist because it was self-reported. Therefore, responders may have been influenced both consciously and unconsciously to provide favorable answers when responding to the questions.

The final limitation for this study is the challenges that surrounded data collection amid the COVID-19 pandemic. This study's initial goal was to conduct cognitive interviews with the SMEs and obtain comprehensive feedback in the process of review and validation; however, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the vaccination rollout and response that public health had to lead, SMEs did not have the time to dedicate to this work. Therefore, the compromise was to send them the checklist in an electronic form to complete. The SMEs were provided with open text fields to provide feedback to indicate if the checklist was not applicable. No comments were received indicating that the checklist was relevant for their LHDs.

This limitation is tied to other challenges highlighted in this study that result from legendary budgetary and staffing deficiencies that disproportionately affect LHDs. On average, LHDs have a mean staff of 57 responsible for responding to serving as the front line for community health needs (Beck, 2017). This number indicates the discrepancy between human capital resources in LHDs and why they are often forced to prioritize staff to serve indirect services and support versus technical roles (Beck, 2017). Ultimately, this prevents LHDs from achieving their workforce planning goals and objectives. Because of this, LHDs lack expendable staff that can primarily focus on activities like succession planning.

While this study reviewed succession planning best practices and consulted with SMEs in the field to learn about applicability, an opportunity to interact with all the LHDs would have been beneficial. This interaction could have provided additional insight into specific LHD success and challenges to succession planning in particular districts. However, by its nature, the

scoping review contributed to helping LHDs by laying the groundwork that can be implemented for succession planning by summarizing common steps and an integrated framework that is essential for applicability and sustainability for adaptation in LHDs.

Implications for Practice

Public health organizations face particularly tough and frightening workforce challenges, especially amid a global pandemic (COVID-19) and an aging workforce. Trends such as this can create challenges for the readiness and implementation of the LHDs to respond to threats to the public's health. Succession planning best practices are designed to improve organizations, increase the workforce talent pipeline, and seamlessly transfer knowledge for operational continuity. There are still gaps that need to be addressed for effective succession planning in LHDs. Seminal researchers previously confirmed that succession planning activities for public health organizations and entities were minimal. Kosterlitz and Lewis (2017) emphasized that if organizations in the public sector do not prioritize succession plans, they will lose valuable history, competency, and knowledge as the older generations retire. Therefore, it would be necessary for organizations to act quickly to have educational and financial resources budgeted for succession planning.

LHDs are the cornerstone of any community regarding public health and are already experiencing a generational change in the workforce (Ledier et al., 2014). One of the most concerning issues that has been iterated in this study which has serious implications on public health is that every 10,000 baby boomers will turn 65 years of age until 2030 (Bernard, 2012). As the baby boomers begin to retire and exit the workforce, so will all the intellectual knowledge and technical expertise over the years if there is no concerted effort to implement succession plans. The outcomes of losing intellectual knowledge and technical expertise are detrimental for

LHDs and impact other operations activities, especially funding (Beck, 2017; Harper, 2018; Ledier et al., 2014). Because collaborations drive public health activities with partners and stakeholders, it is critical to have seamless transitions to minimize turbulence and organizational instability (Santora et al., 2015).

As baby boomers are retiring and leaving vacancies open to be filled in LHDs, the practice of public health is also experiencing a dramatic shift going from direct clinical care to population-based health services (Beck, 2017). This means that most LHDs focus on providing services to their immediate communities, which requires organizational stability. This can be done effectively with adequate financial and human capital resources. Without the resources available to properly execute activities like succession planning, LHDs will always be at risk for operating at half-strength (Harper, 2018; Sellers et al., 2015). Organizational life cycles are continuous and are accompanied by turnovers as employees reach retirement age and are replaced with new employees. Thus, when organizations incorporate processes that allow them to manage transitions properly and make succession planning an integral part of the organization's strategic plan, they stand a higher chance of operational continuity (Beck, 2017; Harper, 2018; Ledier et al., 2014).

Finally, for succession planning to be effective and sustainable, it requires the support and backing of leadership and stakeholders that are fully committed to the process (Schall, 1997). However, according to Schmalzried & Fallon (2007) some executives rated succession planning an activity of low level of importance in LHDs. (Schmalzried & Fallon 2007). This is counterintuitive and a key impediment to one of the main fundamental steps of the integrated succession process that ensures succession planning gets underway.

Leaders are essential to the process and need to fully understand both the benefits and challenges of succession planning and agree that the benefits outweigh the challenges. These benefits include improved operational continuity, organizational stability, improved morale, systematic development of leadership competencies, preservation of institutional financial benefits, and decreased turnover costs associated with recruitment and orientation activities (Darnell & Campbell, 2015; Wiesman, 2013). When these benefits can be mapped to the organization's evaluation outcomes, succession planning is worthwhile and can be sustainable. However, without the support of leadership and stakeholders, succession planning development and implementation are inevitable. Ensuring commitment from these groups is critical to the overall approach of the recommended framework.

This study was developed pre-COVID-19 pandemic. At the time, little was known that a global pandemic would push public health and all its baggage at the front and center of the pandemic. Public health practitioners were on the frontlines protecting the public while providing the public with knowledge and expertise on navigating the pandemic. As the pandemic unfolded, it revealed the lack of funding, staff, and preparation of LHDs to respond and meet the communities they serve. This highlighted all the concerns previously raised by reports and researchers regarding the lack of succession planning and the need to develop and strengthen the public health workforce pipeline. Thus, the study's findings are presented at a critical time when the public health field is faced with the challenges of the COVID-19 global pandemic and when public health can benefit most from implementing a succession plan.

This study's preliminary data indicate that succession planning is not being implemented in local health departments because the three health districts included were among the larger districts in Georgia. Based on the results, if they are not engaged in succession planning, then

smaller health departments and those in rural areas are less likely to be doing succession planning. Therefore, the toolkit developed in this study can serve as a resource to LHDs and, if adopted, can be easily implemented to increase efficiency and operational continuity. In addition, the work from this study addressed some of the significant benefits and challenges organizations face when it comes to succession planning. However, while it acknowledged that the LHDs could not quickly get away from the challenges they face, this study reiterated the individual and organizational benefits and outcomes experienced when succession planning is part of an organization's strategic plan.

Conclusion

Succession planning has gained increased attention by the public sector (ASTHO, 2008) to promote and develop a competent and effective public health workforce. It is also a critical and growing activity that is a priority for the public sector (Weisman, 2018). However, the workforce challenges that public health faces regarding succession planning practices are undeniably (Darnell & Campbell, 2015) vital for development and implementation. Concerns regarding this have grown over the years and continue to be reported in published journals and gray literature, pinpointing the public sector's laggard approach and implications on the workforce pipeline and organizational structure. There is an urgent need to intentionally strengthen the public health workforce by implementing actionable activities like succession planning, especially to counteract the mass exodus of the baby boomer generation currently underway while impacting the public health workforce's health and strength.

Since workforce challenges have been on the rise for decades (Weisman, 2016), using the recommended integrated framework can tactfully help organizations begin to examine their workforce needs and incorporate succession planning best practices into their strategic

framework, followed by the other critical steps outlined in the framework, such as workforce analysis and the selection and identification, to increase talent pools that undergo development and preparation for promotion. As the baby boomers (those born between 1964 to 1955) continue to reach retirement and exit the workforce, organizations must take steps to ensure that intellectual knowledge (Sellers et al., 2015) and other succession planning best practices are adequately captured. In other words, the baton is successfully handed over to the next generation in the workforce.

It is well known that public health has always been subjected to periods of funding feasts and famines throughout its history (Fee & Brown, 2002). These instances have often been associated with outbreaks, natural disasters, epidemics, and other events, for example, the 9-11 attacks on New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington D.C., and Hurricane Katrina. For the most part, public health only receives a massive influx of monies in the wake of these catastrophes. It is required to develop and implement programs quickly to respond to the community and nation's public health concerns. The recommended integrated framework points to strategic planning as an essential aspect for ensuring that it is indeed a vital leadership, human resources, and employee process that ensures LHDs have an adequate number of people with the required competencies in the right jobs at the right time (ASTHO, 2008). Frequently, agencies are proactively finding ways to implement strategies to groom emerging leaders, preserve institutional knowledge, and be prepared to fill vacancies in their organizations before they occur (Harper, 2018).

This study's findings revealed that, overall, succession planning varies with the breadth and depth of perspective and formality (Froelich, 2011). In essence, it is a process that should be used to retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future and also encourage

individual advancement through programs designed for professional and leadership development throughout the organization. (Albrecht, 2016; Rothwell, 2001, 2010). However, the literature exposed succession planning in the field of public health as a newly recognized activity that is slowly gaining attention in the public sector and, more importantly, in public health and LHDs.

When the integrated framework is implemented efficiently, LHDs can benefit.

Comprehensively, the steps ensure efficient and effective outcomes that can be implemented and later evaluated. For example, when there is leadership buy-in from the top, succession planning becomes an integral part of the strategic plan. This forces the organization to examine its workforce and conduct analyses, including analyzing competencies and identifying gaps. The outcomes of the workforce analysis, if done correctly, prompts the organizations to evaluate their current and future workforce needs. This can lead to the organization expanding its selection and identification processes and limiting barriers to hiring mechanisms. Additionally, it opens up opportunities to develop innovative recruitment strategies that lead to increasing the pool of qualified candidates ready to transition into positions when vacancies occur. If these steps are completed with fidelity, the implementation process may allow for seamless transitions, and the return on invests is evident when organizations evaluate the succession planning process.

Although there has been an uptake in research and studies to describe the need for succession planning in the public health sector and specifically LHDs, this study developed an integrated framework that advances the work that LHDs can adopt for succession planning. Nevertheless, additional work needs to be done to continue to explore how succession planning can be prioritized and incorporated into an organization's strategic framework. More agencies are proactively implementing strategies that include some of the critical fundamentals of succession planning because there is an increased awareness of the workforce challenges.

Therefore, agencies and organizations have been prompted to evaluate strategies that involve grooming new leaders, increasing talent pools, preserving and transferring institutional knowledge, and making active plans to fill vacancies before they occur (Harper, 2018). When done well, succession planning involves preparing an organization for a change in leadership (Schall, 1997) while preserving the intellectual knowledge and ensuring that it is transferred from one workforce generation to the next (Darnell & Campbell, 2015). If this trend were to continue and become a wave across LHDs, it would mean that succession planning is being sustained. Ultimately, this would create healthy organizations with financial stability and improved morale that thrive on decreased turnover costs because of strategic planning built into the succession plan for employee retention (Darnell & Campbell, 2015; Schall, 1997).

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (IRB) APPROVAL FROM OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES
AND SPONSORED PROGRAM, GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

RESEARCH INTEGRITY

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
Veazey Hall 3000
PO Box 8005 • STATESBORO, GA 30460
Phone: 912-478-5465
Fax: 912-478-0719
IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu

To: Hardwick, Isabella; Apenteng, Bettye
From: Eleanor Haynes, Director, Research Integrity
Approval Date: 10/7/2020
Subject: Approval with Conditions from the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board – Exempt/Limited Review

After a review of your proposed research project numbered: "H21097" titled: "**Succession Planning in Public Health Organizations and Entities**," it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research **with the understanding that you will abide by the following conditions:**

An amendment request will be submitted for the protocol before the beginning of Phase 2 of the study.

According to the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46, your research protocol is determined to be exempt from full review under the following exemption category(s):

Exemption 1 Research, conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings that specifically involves normal educational practices that are not likely to: adversely impact students' opportunity to learn required educational content or adversely impact the assessment of educators who provide instruction. This includes most research on regular and special education instructional strategies, and research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

Any alteration in the terms or conditions of your involvement may alter this approval. *Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that your research, as submitted, is exempt from IRB approval. You will be asked to notify the IRB upon project completion. If you alter the project, it is your responsibility to notify the IRB and acquire a new determination of exemption.*

APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (IRB) APPROVAL FROM GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH

Kathleen E. Toomey, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner | Brian Kemp, Governor

2 Peachtree Street NW, 15th Floor
Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3142
dph.ga.gov

December 4, 2020

Isabella M Hardwick
DrPH Candidate
GSU (Health Scientist at CDC)
26 Alyssa Road
Newnan, GA. 30273

Project: 201202 - Succession Planning in Public Health Organizations and Entities

Project Status: Exempt

Dear Researcher,

The DPH Institutional Review Board has determined that the above-referenced project is **exempt** from the requirement for IRB review and approval.

Reason:

EXEMPT CATEGORY 2:

Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

- (i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects;
- (ii) Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or
- (iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review.

This exemption applies only to the protocol described in your application. Any modification to this protocol may change the status of this project and may require IRB review and approval except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to human subjects.

If you have any questions regarding this letter or general procedures, please contact the DPH IRB at DPH-irb@dph.ga.gov. Please reference the project # in your communication.

Best wishes in your research endeavors,

Brian Kirtland, Ph.D.

Digitally signed by Brian Kirtland, Ph.D.
DN: cn=Brian Kirtland, Ph.D., o=Institutional Review Board, ou=GA
Dept of Public Health, email=brian.kirtland@dph.ga.gov, c=US
Date: 2020.12.04 15:44:10 -0500

APPENDIX C

GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES

Guidelines and Best Practices

GUIDELINES			
GAO (2003)	ASTHO (2008)	Wilson (2015)	OPM (2017)
(1) Receive Active Support of Top Leadership.	<u>Pre-planning</u> (1) Securing active support of top leadership	(1) Action plan (2) Talent (3) Promotion with Preparation	(1) Linking strategic and workforce planning decisions
(2) Link to Strategic Planning.	(2) Connecting succession planning to strategic planning	(4) Measurement (5) Transparency	(2) Analyzing gaps (3) Identifying talent pools
(3) Identify Talent from Multiple Organizational Levels, Early in Careers, or with Critical Skills	(3) Establishing responsibility for succession planning		(4) Developing succession strategies
(4) Emphasize Developmental Assignments in Addition to Formal Training.	(4) Addressing specific human capital challenges including diversity, leadership capacity, and retention		(5) Implementing succession strategies (6) Monitoring and evaluating
(5) Address Specific Human Capital Challenges, Such as Diversity, Leadership Capacity, and Retention.	<u>Implementation</u> (1) Identifying key leadership and professional positions and assessing needed skills		
(6) Facilitate Broader Transformation Efforts.	(2) Assessing current staff against identified competency requirements to identify talent and development needs (3) Selecting candidates for development (4) Creating opportunities to		

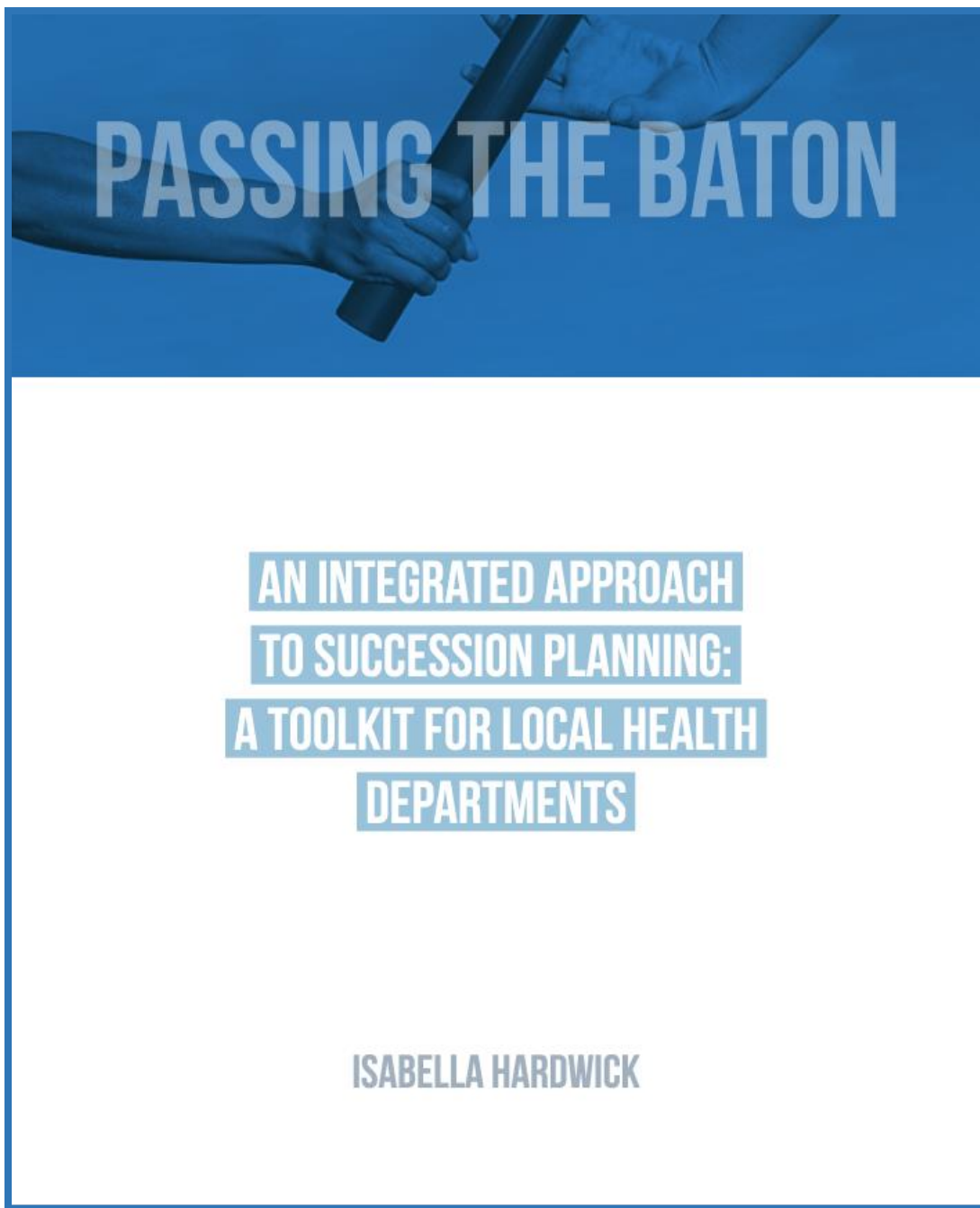
develop
 leadership talent
 (5) Matching the
 talent pool
 Evaluation

BEST PRACTICES

Ligon (2014)	Wilson (2015)	Weisman (2016)
(1) Strategy formulation for succession planning	(1) Engaging and ensuring executive participation and commitment	(1) Pre-employment activities
(2) Identification and selection of leadership candidates	(2) Expanding view of talent Available	(2) Identification of high-potential talent
(3) Development of individuals	(3) Promoting transparency;	(3) Leadership Development
(4) Tracking and validation of individual development	(4) Leveraging human capital	(4) Coaching and Mentoring
(5) Placement into leadership positions	(5) Creating a culture of talent sharing	(5) Goal setting and performance measurement
(6) Evaluation of succession planning	(6) Creating opportunities for education and application	(6) Retention
	(7) Creating and maintaining measurement metrics	

APPENDIX D

AN INTEGRATE APPROACH TO SUCCESSION PLANNING: A TOOLKIT FOR
SUCCESSION PLANNING FOR LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS



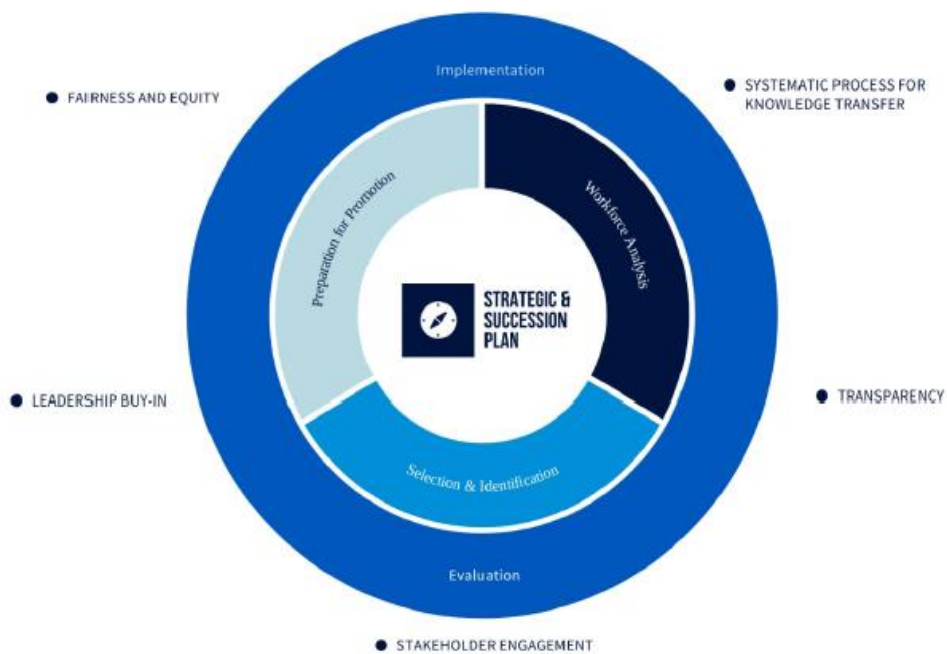
Introduction

This toolkit for Succession Planning is intended to provide local health departments (LHDs) with a framework and guidelines for developing and implementing robust processes for succession planning. The toolkit was developed following a scoping review of the literature on succession planning best practices and was reviewed by subject matter experts from three LHDs in Georgia. The toolkit was developed as part of the author's dissertation for a doctoral degree in Public Health at the Jiann Ping Hsu College of Public Health, Georgia Southern University.

The toolkit includes:

- an integrative framework to guide succession planning.
- a description of each domain in the integrative framework as well best practice guidelines for each domain.
- an organizational checklist to assess existing succession planning process or guide the development of a process for succession planning.
- A modified version of the checklist (to be completed by employees) to assess employees' perception of organizational succession planning efforts.

Integrated Framework for Succession Planning



Process Document: Description of Framework Domains and Steps

Domain	Step
Strategic Planning	<p>This step involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying the long-term vision and direction of the organization • Developing an action plan that links the strategic plan and workforce plans • Securing active support of top leadership • Connecting succession planning to the values of the organization • Creating a SWOT analysis that identifies the organizations current and future needs, including workforce needs <p>Developing a communication plan</p>
Workforce Analysis (Competency modeling and gap analysis)	<p>This step involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing existing core and technical competencies and models using focus groups and survey methodology • Conducting competency gap analyses by examining gaps and deficiencies for core competencies and technical competency requirements • Identifying current proficiency gaps in incumbents' • Developing competency model and job analysis documentation <p>Calculating talent needed to meet organizations long term plans</p>
Selection and Identification	<p>This step involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying and selecting candidates for development from multiple organizational levels • Assessing individuals for learning agility (an individual's readiness and ability to learn from experiences and be adaptive to changing environments) • Identifying recruitment strategies • Recruitment and relocation bonuses • Special programs • Identifying retention strategies • Retention bonuses <p>Quality of work life programs</p>
Preparation for Promotion	<p>This step involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating opportunities to develop leadership talent • Identifying development/learning strategies • Goal setting and performance measurement • Using 360° feedback for development purposes • Tracking and validating individual development • Emphasizing developmental assignments in addition to formal training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planned job assignments - Formal development - Coaching and mentoring - Assessment and feedback - Action learning projects - Communities of practice - Shadowing

Process Document: Description of Framework Domains and Steps

Implementation	<p>This step involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a blueprint for putting the strategies into operation and applying measures of success • Implementing succession strategies • Implementing strategies for maintaining senior level commitment • Implementing the communication plan • Implementing recruitment strategies • Implementing retention strategies • Implementing development/learning strategies • Linking succession planning to HR processes • Performance management • Compensation • Recognition Transparency • Recruitment and Retention • Workforce planning
Evaluation	<p>This step involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an evaluation and accountability plan that overtly describes measures, and monitors what success looks like • Tracking selections from talent pools • Listening to leader feedback on success of internal talent and internal hires • Analyzing satisfaction surveys from customers, employees, and stakeholders • Assessing response to changing requirements and needs

Cross-cutting elements that are continuous and necessary for sustaining the succession planning framework include:

Leadership-buy-in	<p>This involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • connecting succession planning to the needs and interests of senior leaders. • receiving active support of top leadership
Stakeholder engagement	<p>This involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishing responsibility for succession planning • engaging and ensuring executive participation and commitment from leadership, stakeholders, and partners
Transparency	<p>This involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitating broad communication around succession planning activities • providing clear and consistent communication from organizational leaders about what constitutes success in development • mutual honesty in the promotion process and regarding upward mobility • creating a culture of talent sharing
Fairness and Equity	<p>This involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • including initiatives for fairness and equity as part of an organization's training and strategic planning



Process Document: Description of Framework Domains and Steps

**Systematic process
to knowledge
transfer**

- creating an environment that values training around diversity, fairness, equity, and inclusion
 - developing needs assessment programs that evaluate the current state of the organization, the employees, the stakeholders, and the customers
- This involves:
- identifying and implementing knowledge capture and transfer strategies
 - facilitating smooth transfer of responsibilities from employees that are retiring to emerging leaders
 - developing programs that allow select retirees to become reemployed annuitants to facilitate the transfer of knowledge in critical areas
-



Succession Planning Checklist: LHDs

Succession Planning contributes towards an organization's continued survival and success by ensuring that replacements have been groomed and prepared to fill vacancies on short notice when voluntary or involuntary separation occurs in the organization.

You have been identified as a consultant/subject matter expert in your field that can provide valuable feedback on your perceptions about succession planning in your organization.

The checklist is focused on domains that are fundamental to understanding succession planning activities in your organization (1) Strategic and Succession Planning (2) Workforce Analysis (3) Selection and Identification (4) Preparation for Promotion (5) Implementation and (6) Evaluation.

Succession Readiness Questions

Yes Some
what No



Strategic and Succession Planning

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Does your organization have a strategic plan?
<i>[If you answer no to this question continue to Q4]</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Does the strategic plan include a succession plan? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Is the plan formal (documented) and accessible to staff? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Is the plan transparent and clearly communicated to all staff? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



Workforce Analysis

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 5. Does your organization conduct any exercises to analyze its current workforce? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Does your organization conduct any exercises to analyze its future workforce needs? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Does your organization assess and evaluate staff core competencies? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Does your organization assess and evaluate staff technical competencies? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



Selection and Identification

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 9. Does your organization have professional development (PD) plans?
<i>[If you answer no to this question continue to Q.11]</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Do the plans include a transparent career path/trajectory? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Succession Planning Checklist: LHDs

11. Do you complete the professional development (PD) plans annually?
12. Does your organization have recruitment plans or strategies in place?
13. Does your organization have retention plans or strategies in place?





Preparation for Promotion

14. Does your organization offer any of the following: *(Please select all that apply)?*
[If you answer no to this question – you have completed the checklist]
- a. Planned job assignments
- b. Formal development
- c. Coaching or Mentoring
- d. Assessment and Feedback
- e. Action learning projects
- f. Communities of practice
- g. Shadowing
15. If yes, is this documented in your professional development (PD) plan?
16. Have you participated in any of these programs in your organization?

Succession Planning Checklist: LHDs

The following questions are for domains (5) **Implementation** and (6) **Evaluation**. They only apply if your organization has a succession plan and your answered yes to Q.1

	Yes	Some what	No
 Implementation			
17. Does your organization have an implementation plan that maps or outlines an implementation process of the strategic plan? <i>[If you answer no to this question continue – you have completed the checklist]</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Is the succession planning process connected to your organization Human Resources (HR) processes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
 Evaluation			
19. Does your organization have an evaluation plan that plainly describes what success looks like?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Does your organization gather satisfaction surveys on succession planning from employees, and stakeholders?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. Does your organization gather satisfaction surveys on workforce development from employees, and stakeholders?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. Do you have any comments that you would like to share?			

Succession Planning Checklist: Employees

This checklist is to be completed by employees.

Thank you for your willingness to complete this checklist on Succession Planning in Local Health Departments (LHDs). The information that you provide will be used to assess the extent of succession planning activities in LHDs.

The checklist is focused on domains that are fundamental to understanding succession planning activities in your organization. It will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. Your feedback is anonymous and will be treated in a secure manner. By continuing to the next page, you have consented to complete this checklist.

	Yes	Some what	No
Strategic and Succession Planning			
1. Does your organization have a strategic plan? <i>[If you answer no to this question continue to Q4]</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Does the strategic plan include a succession plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Is the plan formal (documented) and accessible to staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Is the plan transparent and clearly communicated to all staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workforce Analysis			
5. Does your organization evaluate and analyze staff competencies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Selection and Identification			
6. Does your organization have professional development (PD) plans for employees?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. If yes, do the plans include a transparent career path/trajectory?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Do you complete the professional development (PD) plans annually?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Preparation for Promotion			
9. Does your organization offer any of the following? Please select all that apply.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Succession Planning Checklist: Employees

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Planned job assignments | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Formal development | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Coaching or Mentoring | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Assessment and Feedback | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. Action learning projects | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. Communities of practice | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. Shadowing | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h. Performance Appraisal | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i. Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| j. None of the Above | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|
 | | | |
| 10. Have you participated in any of these programs in your organization?
Select all that apply. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|
 | | | |
| a. Planned job assignments | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Formal development | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Coaching or Mentoring | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Assessment and Feedback | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. Action learning projects | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. Communities of practice | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. Shadowing | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h. Performance Appraisal | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i. Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Succession Planning Checklist: Employees

j. None of the Above

11. Does your organization gather satisfaction surveys on succession planning from employees and stakeholders?

12. Does your organization gather satisfaction surveys on workforce development from employees and stakeholders?

13. Do you have any comments that you would like to share?